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QUEEN VICTORIA



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(From the portrait by A. E. Challon)

QUEEN VICTORIA

BY

MONA WILSON

WITH A FRONTISPIECE

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PREFACE

I SHRANK from this task, but Mr. Davies persisted, and the temptation was too great, the comparison of Queen Victoria with Queen Elizabeth too alluring.

I have confined myself to Victoria's development and achievement as a Queen, leaving aside as irrelevant to my purpose the details of her private life, and from the record of her reign selecting those incidents which seemed to me to throw most light on her character, methods and influence as a constitutional sovereign.

Forbidden openly to acknowledge my debts, I must content myself with saying that the existence of this book is mainly due to the encouragement, any merit it may possess is largely due to the help, which I have received from friends.

QUEEN VICTORIA

My thanks are due to Mrs. Clive of Brympton for her kind permission to reproduce the portrait of Queen Victoria by A. E. Challon, an artist of Swiss extraction, the leading member of the Sketching Society in which the Queen and Prince Consort were interested.

MONA WILSON.

THE OLD OXYARD,
OARE, MARLBOROUGH.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

<i>Prime Ministers</i>	<i>Contemporary Events</i>
1837-41. Melbourne.	1839-43. Chartist Movement.
1841-46. Peel.	1840. Turco-Egyptian War.
	1845, 1846. Irish Famine.
	1846. Repeal of the Corn Laws.
1846-52. Russell.	1848. Fall of Louis Philippe.
	1851. Great Exhibition.
	„ Coup d'État.
1852. Derby.	
1852-55. Aberdeen.	1854-56. Crimean War.
1855-58. Palmerston.	
	1857. Indian Mutiny.
1858-59. Derby.	
	1859. Franco-Austrian War.
1859-65. Palmerston.	1860. Garibaldi in Sicily.
	1861. Death of Prince Consort.
	1861-65. American Civil War.
1865-66. Russell.	1864. Schleswig-Holstein.
1866-68. Derby.	1866. Austro-Prussian War.
1868. Disraeli.	1867. Second Reform Act.
1868-74. Gladstone.	1868. 'Alabama' Convention.
	1869. Irish Disestablishment.
	1870-71. Franco-Prussian War.
	1872. 'Alabama' Award.

QUEEN VICTORIA

<i>Prime Ministers</i>		<i>Contemporary Events</i>	
1874-80.	Disraeli.	1875.	Suez Canal Shares purchased.
		1876.	Bulgarian Atrocities.
		1877.	Empress of India.
		1878.	Treaty of Berlin.
		1879.	Zulu War.
1880-85.	Gladstone.	1879-80.	Afghan War.
		1881.	Majuba Hill.
		1882.	Phoenix Park Murders.
		1882.	Bombardment of Alexandria.
		1884.	Third Reform Act.
		1885.	Death of Gordon.
1885-86.	Salisbury.	1886.	First Home Rule Bill.
1886.	Gladstone.	1890.	Dismissal of Bismarck.
1886-92.	Salisbury.	„	Cession of Heligoland, and Partition of East Africa.
1892-94.	Gladstone.	1893.	Second Home Rule Bill.
1894-95.	Rosebery.	1895-96.	Jameson Raid.
1895-1901.	Salisbury.	1897.	Turco-Greek War.
		1898.	Recovery of Khartoum.
		1899-1902.	South African War.

CHAPTER I

This little lady is educating with much care, and watched so closely, that no busy maid has a moment to whisper, 'You are heir of England.' I suspect, if we could dissect the little heart, we should find that some pigeon or other bird of the air had carried the matter.

SCOTT.

THE Princess Alexandrina Victoria was born on May 24, 1819, at Kensington Palace. Her father, the Duke of Kent, fourth son of George III., stood fourth in succession to the Crown. In 1817 Princess Charlotte, daughter of George IV., the only legitimate heir of her generation, had died after the birth of a still-born son, and her three bachelor uncles had hurried, late in life, to the altar, with the object of providing a possible successor. The Duchess of Kent, daughter of the Duke of Saxe-Coburg, and sister of Prince Leopold, Princess Charlotte's husband, was the widow of Prince Ernest of Leiningen, and Regent for her son. The Duke, who was heavily in debt, settled at first in his wife's dower-house in the principality of Leiningen, but shortly

QUEEN VICTORIA

before their daughter's birth the couple came to England, that their child might be born on English soil. When the baby was only eight months old the Duke died suddenly at Sidmouth. A few days later the old King, George III., followed his son, and only two lives, those of her uncles, the Duke of York and the Duke of Clarence, now stood between the little Princess and the throne. There was still the possibility that the Duke of Clarence, afterwards William IV., would have an heir, but, in fact, only one of his two daughters lived, and that for less than three months. Prince Leopold, who had hastened to Sidmouth, persuaded his sister that she must resign her German regency, and devote her life to the child, who might become an English Queen. He supplemented her annuity from his own handsome pension as widower of Princess Charlotte, and she took permanent possession of the apartments allotted to her at Kensington Palace, where she was joined by her elder daughter, Princess Féodore of Leiningen.

The Duke of Kent had been on bad terms with his brother, the Regent, now George IV., and the foreign widow, with her pretensions as mother of the future sovereign, was not

QUEEN VICTORIA

welcomed by the Royal Family. Humbug Leopold, as Mr. Creevey unkindly calls him—and the reader-between-the-lines of his letters may not be disinclined to agree with Mr. Creevey—lived on his own property at Claremont, but he too was a foreigner with a merely fortuitous standing. His hope of becoming King of England in all but name, a position for which he had industriously qualified himself, was shattered, but might he not become, again in all but name, the father of the Queen? Her soldier father, the ‘Corporal,’ whose meticulous attention to unimportant details was a standing joke with the Duke of Wellington, became a legendary inheritance, piously decorated by his widow with military splendour: Leopold filled his place, and filled it amply, as his niece was constantly reminded, and as she always cordially admitted. Mother and uncle were justified: the Duke of York died in 1827, and, three years later, George iv. The Princess, Drina in private life, but always officially Victoria, became heir-presumptive to the throne, and the Duchess of Kent was appointed Regent in the event of William iv.’s death.

Meanwhile the baby had grown into a vivacious and agreeable child, devoted to her

QUEEN VICTORIA

dolls and her half-sister. She had strenuously refused to learn her letters till, at the age of five, Princess Féodore's German governess began to do battle with her. Miss—afterwards Baroness—Lehzen, though a strict disciplinarian, won her charge's affection, and she began to read, though it was never a favourite occupation. Not that she was a lazy child : she was always anxious to be busy, watering and picking the flowers in the Palace Gardens, playing with such other children as the Duchess thought suitable companions, and, later on, singing and drawing ; and her scrupulous truthfulness lightened her governess' task. But the Duchess, anxious, over-conscientious, and ill at ease in her adopted country, did not contrive to give the little girl a happy childhood : the Queen herself always referred to it as a melancholy time, and there is even a note of bitterness in Princess Féodore's recollections. ' Not to have enjoyed the pleasures of youth is nothing, but to have been deprived of all intercourse, and not one cheerful thought in that dismal existence of ours, was very hard. My only happy time was going or driving out with you and Lehzen ; then I could speak and look as I liked. I escaped some years of imprisonment, which you, my poor darling sister, had

QUEEN VICTORIA

to endure after I was married.' However stern and repressive the Duchess may have been, the first thing to strike observers was always the perfect naturalness of her younger daughter, to which years soon added an extraordinary dignity. Visits to Prince Leopold at Claremont, where old Louie, Princess Charlotte's maid, spoilt her in a way forbidden to the Kensington household, were a welcome relief. The English Royal Family troubled themselves little about her, but were not unkindly. On her first visit to Windsor at the age of five the obese and gouty monarch charmed her with his 'Give me your little paw.' He presented her with his portrait set in diamonds as an order, and next day, driving in his phaeton with the scarlet and blue liveries, said 'Pop her in,' and took her to see the Fishing Temple on Virginia Water. Another old uncle, the Duke of York, gave her a donkey, and provided a Punch and Judy show for her amusement. Later the Queen used to recall with glee her trick of admiring things lavishly in the hope that they would be given to her, by which she tried to extract some profit from the dull visits to her aunts.

The Duchess had a heavy sense of her responsibilities. The year King George died she

QUEEN VICTORIA

arranged for a formal examination of the Princess' scholastic attainments by the Bishops of London and Lincoln in the presence of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Their report was to the effect that, 'In answering a great variety of questions proposed to her, the Princess displayed an accurate knowledge of the most important features of Scripture History, and of the leading truths and precepts of the Christian Religion as taught by the Church of England, as well as an acquaintance with the chronology and principal facts of English History remarkable in so young a person. To questions in Geography, the use of the Globes, Arithmetic and Latin grammar, the answers which the Princess returned were equally satisfactory'—and the Archbishop pronounced the system pursued to be 'very judicious, and particularly suitable to Her Highness's exalted station.' The little object of all this anxiety was at any rate receiving a severe training in self-possession.¹

In 1828 the Princess had lost the sympathetic companionship of her half-sister, who married the Prince von Hohenlohe, and three years later her uncle Leopold, less stern a mentor than her mother, became King of the Belgians.

¹ The Queen's French, spoken and written, was perfect, but she always had her German correspondence overhauled.

QUEEN VICTORIA

In spite of her sheltered existence the surrounding atmosphere became more and more stormy with the certainty of her ultimate accession. The Duchess' jealous tutelage of her daughter was resented by King William as a criticism on himself and his Court: he wished his heir to be introduced to her future subjects under his own auspices. But the Duchess arranged well-advertised tours—Royal Progresses, sneered the King—to places of interest and instruction, during which she answered addresses on the Princess' behalf, laid foundation-stones, and—worse than all—insisted that her yacht should receive a royal salute, until this aggression was prohibited by an Order in Council. Moreover the Duchess' politics were suspect: the Duke of Kent's few English friends had been mainly radicals and reformers. Rumour had it that Lord Durham 'is now Prime Minister to the Duchess of Kent and *Queen Victoria*, and they are getting up all their arrangements together in the Isle of Wight for a new reign!' The gentle Queen Adelaide tried in vain to act as mediator: during a State Banquet at Windsor in 1836 the King broke out in a violent speech, denouncing the Duchess, who was seated next him, as a 'person,' surrounded with evil advisers, and guilty of conduct disrespectful to

QUEEN VICTORIA

himself. He would insist in future that his niece should attend all Court functions, and he hoped to be spared long enough to baulk the Duchess of her regency. The Princess burst into tears, the Duchess ordered her carriage, and was with difficulty prevailed on to spend another night under his roof. His final insult was his birthday present next year, when his wish was fulfilled by the Princess' attainment of her legal majority—a letter to be given into her own hands, containing the offer of an independent allowance of £10,000 a year.

Although there was continual friction between the King and the Duchess, and she was a conscientiously severe parent, the Princess' diary, which she kept assiduously from childhood, contains the frequent entry 'I was VERY MUCH AMUSED indeed.' She adored her dogs and her ponies ; and her religious and historical studies with the Dean of Chester were agreeably varied by plays and concerts, opera and dances, though 'in my station I unfortunately cannot valse and gallop.' King Leopold kept up a constant correspondence with her, full of advice, as she grew older, about fitting herself for her future responsibilities, and of instruction concerning continental politics. It had long been a cherished scheme with the

QUEEN VICTORIA

Coburg family that the Princess should marry her cousin, Prince Albert, and in 1836 King Leopold considered it time for the pair to become acquainted. With this end he arranged a visit from the Prince and his elder brother, Ernest. King William was furious : he had had enough of these Coburgs. He swore that the Princes should be forbidden to land, and immediately invited another candidate, Prince Alexander, the younger son of the Prince of Orange. King Leopold was aghast. ‘ Really and truly,’ he wrote to his niece, ‘ I never heard or saw anything like it, and I hope it will a *little rouse your spirit* ; now that slavery is even abolished in the British Colonies, I do not comprehend *why your lot alone should be to be kept, a white little slavey in England*, for the pleasure of the Court, who never bought you, as I am not aware of their having gone to any expense on that head, or the King’s even having *spent a sixpence for your existence*. I expect that my visits in England will also be prohibited by an Order in Council.’ But King William was not as bad as his word : after the Orange party, reluctantly entertained at a ball by the Duchess of Kent, had taken their departure, the Coburg Princes arrived. The Princess Victoria was charmed by her cousins :

QUEEN VICTORIA

Albert, who is just as tall as Ernest but stouter, is extremely handsome ; his hair is about the same colour as mine ; his eyes are large and blue, and he has a beautiful nose and a very sweet mouth with fine teeth ; but the charm of his countenance is his expression, which is most delightful ; c'est à la fois full of goodness and sweetness, and very clever and intelligent.

They both draw very well, particularly Albert, and are both exceedingly fond of music ; they play very nicely on the piano. The more I see them the more I am delighted with them, and the more I love them. They are so natural, so kind, so *very* good and so well instructed and informed ; they are so well bred, so truly merry and quite like children and yet very grown up in their manners and conversation. It is delightful to be with them ; they are so fond of being occupied too ; they are quite an example for any young person.

There was no love-making : no word of the future passed between the young people : but a letter to King Leopold, conveyed to him by the Coburgs themselves, intimated that his niece was willing to accept the family arrangement.

I must thank you, my beloved Uncle, for the prospect of *great* happiness you have contributed to give me, in the person of dear Albert. Allow me, then, my dearest Uncle, to tell you how delighted I am with him, and how much I like him in every way. He possesses every quality that could be

QUEEN VICTORIA

desired to render me perfectly happy. He is so sensible, so kind, and so good, and so amiable too. He has, besides, the most pleasing and delightful exterior and appearance you can possibly see.

I have only now to beg you, my dearest Uncle, to take care of the health of one, now *so dear* to me, and to take him under *your special* protection. I hope and trust that all will go on prosperously and well on this subject of so much importance to me.

A few months later King Leopold braved the wrath of his uncle-in-law, and came over in person. The Princess notes in her diary : ‘ He talked over many important things. He is *so* clever, *so* mild, and *so* prudent ; *he* alone can give me good advice on *every* thing. His advice is perfect.’

She was now meeting the leading politicians of both parties at Drawing Rooms and dinners, and she read their speeches.

Our friend, Mr. Hume,¹ made a most violent speech at a dinner given to him and old George Byng at Drury Lane last week. He called Sir R. Peel and some other Tories ‘ the cloven foot,’ which I think rather strong. I think that *great* violence and striving such a pity, on both sides, don’t you, dear Uncle ?

The Duchess entertained many eminent persons, such as Whately, Archbishop of Dublin, and Byron’s friend, Sir John Cam Hobhouse,

¹ Joseph Hume, a prominent member of the Radical party.

QUEEN VICTORIA

at Kensington Palace : among them the Princess mentions 'Lord Palmerston, with whom I had much pleasant and amusing conversation after dinner—you know how agreeable he is.' On another occasion Count Pozzo di Borgo, the Russian Ambassador, 'gave me a long, I must say clever, dissertation about the state of France, during dinner-time.' The diary and letters show abundant vitality, and a readiness to be interested and amused, but they are childish and immature compared, for example, with those of that astute and witty young person, Maria Josepha Holroyd. The Princess was too undeveloped mentally to make the most of her opportunities. Occasionally, indeed, she shows discrimination : take this portrait of Croker.

Der erste ist ein kluger, aber nach meiner Meinung, nicht angenehmer Mann ; er spricht zu viel. . . . He told many anecdotes and made many remarks upon the various nations, ein wenig sehr stark. Il aime trop à étaler, il n'a pas de tact ; il prend trop le ton supérieur.

A singular foretaste of Disraeli's Mr. Rigby.¹

¹ 'He did not particularly like Mr. Rigby. There was something jarring and grating in that gentleman's voice and modes from which the chords of the young heart shrank. He was not tender ; though perhaps he wished it, scarcely kind ; but he was good-natured, at least to children.'

QUEEN VICTORIA

Even before the Princess' eighteenth birthday it had become clear that King William could not last much longer. Her uncle Leopold was anxious to keep control of the situation : letters were not enough, and he sent over Baron Stockmar as his understudy in the part of confidential adviser. Stockmar, originally his personal physician, had been present in an unprofessional capacity at the deaths of both Princess Charlotte and the Duke of Kent. He was a highly-educated man, interested in philosophy and politics, now a close friend of King Leopold's, and fully apprised of all his views about constitutional government in general and the Princess' immediate future in particular. She should make no change on her accession, and so gain time to feel her way. The day before King William's death she wrote :

I look forward to the event which it seems is likely to occur soon, with calmness and quietness ; I am not alarmed at it, and yet I do not suppose myself quite equal to all : I trust, however, that with *good will, honesty and courage* I shall not, at all events, *fail*. Your advice is most excellent, and you may depend upon it I shall make use of it, and follow it, as also what Stockmar says. I *never showed* myself, *openly*, to belong to *any party*, and I *do not* belong to any party. The Administration will undoubtedly be well received by me, the more so as I have *real*

QUEEN VICTORIA

confidence in them, and in particular in Lord Melbourne, who is a straight-forward, honest, clever and good man.

Next morning, June 20, 1837, she was awakened at six o'clock by her mother with the announcement that the Lord Chamberlain and the Archbishop wished to see her. She was Queen.

CHAPTER II

A rosebud set with little wilful thorns.

TENNYSON.

ONE word rings out rapturously, a trumpet note, in the first pages of the young Queen's diary—*alone*. She had received the Archbishop and the Lord Chamberlain *alone*. When Lord Melbourne came, the Whig Prime Minister, whom she intended to retain, she saw him 'of course quite alone, as I shall *always* do all my Ministers.' Quite alone she went in to hold her first Council : she had her dinner alone. Until her accession she had never walked downstairs without her governess or some one else to hold her hand : she had shared her mother's bedroom at Kensington Palace. Now she was not only a Queen but her own mistress : the bonds of her tutelage had burst asunder. Lord Melbourne came again in the evening : 'I had a very important and a very comfortable conversation with him.' For months, for years, she had been deluged with excellent advice : there was no homiletic strain in Lord Mel-

QUEEN VICTORIA

bourne : he never forgot that he was the Queen's Minister, not her tutor.

At first all went well. The Queen had a good voice and clear enunciation, and, in spite of her diminutive stature—she was under five feet—an excellent presence : as the central figure at public functions she formed a charming contrast to her predecessors. After King William's stupid truculence her extreme receptivity was a relief : it served to mask both her ignorance and her lack of intellectual power even from so acute an observer as Lord Palmerston. He asserted that Ministers would soon find that she was no ordinary person, and that, whatever she might owe to her mother, the Queen had an understanding of her own that could have been made by no one. She had always enjoyed being busy, and now there was a new delightful importance about her occupations. ' I have *so many* communications from the Ministers, and from me to them, and I get so many papers to sign *every* day, that I have always a *very great* deal to do ; but for want of time and space I do not write all these things down. I *delight* in this work.' Soon after her accession King Leopold came over, and she lamented that she had not time to take minutes of his talks with Lord Melbourne :

QUEEN VICTORIA

‘the sound observations they make, and the impartial advice they give me would make a most interesting book. Uncle and he perfectly agree in Politics too, which are the *best* there *are*.’ Lord Melbourne, quoted in her diary, considered her official manner perfect.

People said that I was ‘lofty, high, stern and decided, but that’s much better than that you should be thought familiar.’ ‘I said to Stanley,’ he continued, ‘“It’s far better that the Queen should be thought high and decided, than that she should be thought weak.” “By God!” he said, “they don’t think that of her; you needn’t be afraid of that.”’ Lord M. seemed to say this with pleasure. ‘The natural thing,’ he continued, ‘would be to suppose that a girl would be weak and undecided; but they don’t think that.’

Lord Melbourne was also delighted by a Scottish journalist’s description of the Queen as a young girl ‘rendered prematurely grave, a large searching eye, an open anxious nostril, and a firm mouth.’

The Queen left Kensington for Buckingham Palace. There the Duchess of Kent had separate apartments, but, as her daughter’s mentor in political affairs, she completely disappeared. Baroness Lehzen acted as the Queen’s factotum in domestic matters. Stock-

QUEEN VICTORIA

mar remained in England for a time, but a foreigner, however able and disinterested, could not be allowed to fill the post of political private secretary to the sovereign, designed for him by King Leopold : Lord Melbourne, to save gossip and friction, undertook that duty himself.

To Lord Melbourne the Queen showed a side of her character concealed from her other Ministers, diffidence and a consciousness of her own defects : he was often called upon for reassurance and encouragement when she deplored her childishness and her tiresome questions. She was uncertain of her own power : when Lord John Russell, depressed by the death of his first wife, threatened resignation she regretted that she was of no use. ‘ Oh no,’ said Lord Melbourne, ‘ quite the contrary.’ She said she hoped that he would use her name whenever he thought proper. ‘ Thank you, Ma’am, I’ll do so,’ he replied ; ‘ I’ll do what I think right and best about that.’ If the Queen’s early diary had no other interest, it must have been prized for the portrait of Melbourne—Melbourne with the flexible and changeable mouth, which his sculptor, Chantrey, found so baffling—courtly, dreamy, witty, often more than a little bored by constant

QUEEN VICTORIA

intercourse with so immature a creature : ‘ It’s a sign of a composed mind,’ he said when reproved for going to sleep in the royal presence. He once repeated to her with tears in his eyes and most emphatically Lord Eldon’s words : ‘ The *King of England* is *always King* ; *King* in the helplessness of infancy, *King* in the decrepitude of age.’ Because this girl was his Queen he sacrificed his leisure to her development : he was, as she said, like a father to her. And a more comfortable father than King Leopold, who had wished her to go to church twice on Sunday, ‘ but Lord M. assured him (as it is) that that was unnecessary. George III., Lord M. believes, never went twice, though a strict man ; and wasn’t at all for all those Puritanical notions ; and he’s the person, Lord M. said, to look to in all these matters. Lord M. said it wasn’t well to puzzle myself with controversies, but read the simple truths ; the Psalms he thinks very difficult to understand, and he thinks very probably *not* right translated.’ In theory Lord Melbourne was a strong Churchman—‘ Upon the whole our Church is the best Church, the least meddling ’—but he had to be teased into a decent amount of church-going at Windsor : ‘ he would go, he said, “ though it’s against my creed : I’m

QUEEN VICTORIA

a quietist ; it's the creed which Fénelon embraced, and which Mme. Guillon taught ; you are so perfect that you are exempted from all external ordinances, and are always living in God." ' A prominent member of the Opposition, the Duke of Wellington, said that Melbourne was the best Minister the Queen could have, ' but I'm afraid he jokes too much with her, and makes her treat things too lightly which are very serious.' Perhaps the Duke would have disapproved of the Prime Minister's jaunty account of himself as a disciple of Mme. Guyon, and of his explanation of Princess Féodore's headaches : ' When those people get back and among their children, they don't dress, and nothing's so bad for a woman.' Stockmar might be, as King Leopold urged, ' a *living* dictionary of all matters scientific and politic that happened these thirty years,' but Melbourne with his light touch imparted his information in a way more stimulating to her intelligence : ' he has such *stores* of knowledge ; such a wonderful memory ; he knows about everything and everybody ; *who* they were, and *what* they did ; and he imparts all his knowledge in such a *kind* and agreeable manner ; it does me a *world* of good ; and his conversations always *improve* one greatly.' Novel reading had

QUEEN VICTORIA

been strictly forbidden by the Duchess, and the *Bride of Lammermoor* was her first venture. Melbourne approved on the whole of Sir Walter's works, but condemned Dickens, by whom the Queen was entranced, as a writer about low people, who were better ignored. This was his general attitude toward democracy: let the poor alone, and on no account educate them or they will become even more objectionable. In spite of the different influences of after years Melbourne left his mark upon her: an occasional dryness, coming as a surprise, sounds like an echo of some words of his. Of Lord John Russell she once remarked that he had only two subjects, himself and the Revolution of 1688: if he could find a third he would be quite entertaining. Her comment on Rubinstein's drinking-song — 'Why! you could not drink a cup of tea to that' — is also in Melbourne's vein. And although her sense of humour, which has been obscured by the notorious 'We are not amused,'¹ was never subtle, Melbourne deserves some credit for its adaptability. Many years later, the deaf

¹ The tradition is that a young naval officer was commanded to repeat a story with which he had entertained a group of her ladies, the point of it being a practical joke on a superior officer. Her concern for discipline dominated her sense of humour.

QUEEN VICTORIA

Admiral Seymour, lunching with the Queen after the capsizing of the *Seamew*, was asked by her 'How is Miss Seymour?' 'Ma'am?' The question was repeated. 'All right, thank you, Ma'am, we've got her on her side, and to-morrow we're going to scrape her bottom.' The company, aghast, held their breath, but the Queen leant back in her chair, and laughed long and heartily.

Her Minister's faith in the Queen's strength of character was soon justified. The wave of revolution, which had swept over Europe in 1830, had effected the separation of Belgium from Holland, but the Treaty arranged by the Powers, of whom England was one, had not been ratified by the King of Holland. King Leopold hoped that, with his niece and pupil on the English throne, it would be possible to rearrange the terms to his own advantage. Neutrality was surely inhuman where an uncle was concerned, and an uncle who had treated her like his own daughter. He was by turns sentimental and irascible, but the Queen remained unmoved : she even turned the tables on him, and gave him some advice on his unreasonable attitude towards the Dutch. Her letters owed their politeness in part to Melbourne : he agreed that Leopold was in the

QUEEN VICTORIA

wrong, and that the appeal to her affections was unfair, but he was anxious that she should avoid an open quarrel.

Another manifestation of the Queen's will was less happy. She had broken the leading-strings where her mother and her uncle were concerned, but her old governess, the Baroness Lehzen, still influenced her in domestic matters, and her advice probably affected the Queen's conduct of an unfortunate incident, which occurred soon after the Coronation. Lady Flora Hastings, one of the Duchess of Kent's ladies, was accused of pregnancy, and subjected to a medical examination by the Queen's physician, Sir James Clark. Her family were naturally indignant, and her mother wrote to the Queen demanding an inquiry into the circumstances with a view to reparation. Melbourne replied, with a rebuke for the tone of her letter, which was harshly repeated when she demanded the dismissal of Sir James Clark. The Queen had expressed her regret informally to Lady Flora, but no public amends were made. This insensibility was the more marked as the Duchess of Kent had behaved with great kindness to Lady Flora, writing sympathetically to her mother, and dismissing the offending physician from her own service. A few months

QUEEN VICTORIA

later, July 1839, Lady Flora died from an enlargement of the liver. As the Hastings family, well-known Tories, had published the correspondence, the Queen's popularity had already suffered : now she was publicly insulted by shouts of 'Mrs. Melbourne,' and was hissed by two ladies at Ascot.¹

Meanwhile, in May, a serious political crisis had arisen. The planters in Jamaica had rebelled after the emancipation of the slaves, and the Government proposed to suspend the constitution. The proposal was only carried by a majority of five, and Melbourne thought it necessary to resign. On his advice the Queen sent for the Duke of Wellington, who refused to form a Government, and advised her to ask Sir Robert Peel. The Queen, who had completely identified herself with the Whig administration, was in despair. She told Melbourne how much she disliked Peel :

The Queen don't like his manner after—— Oh ! how different, how dreadfully so, to that frank, open, natural and most kind, warm manner of Lord Melbourne. The Duke I like by far better than Peel. . . . The Queen was very much collected, civil and high, and betrayed no agitation during

¹ 'Taper had had his knuckles well rapped for hiring several link-boys to bawl a much-wronged lady's name in the Park when the Court prorogued Parliament.'—*Coningsby*.

QUEEN VICTORIA

these two trying audiences. But afterwards again *all* gave way. She feels Lord Melbourne will understand it, amongst enemies to those she most relied on and most esteemed ; but what is worst of all is the being deprived of seeing Lord Melbourne as she used to do.

At a second interview the Queen liked her potential Prime Minister even less. On her accession Melbourne had injudiciously recommended the appointment of Ladies of the Household who were all related to himself and his Whig colleagues. Peel, quite properly, asked that the principal posts, as in the case of male members of the Household, should be treated as political, and filled by Tory Ladies. The Queen was up in arms at once. ‘ Sir Robert Peel has behaved very ill, and has insisted on my giving up my Ladies, to which I replied that I never would consent, and I never saw a man so frightened.’ The suggestion was *infamous* : she never talked politics to her Ladies : ‘ the Queen of England will not submit to such trickery.’ ‘ Keep yourself in readiness, for you may soon be wanted,’ she told Lord Melbourne. Melbourne was left under the impression, until he saw a letter from Peel next day, that his intention was to remove all the Ladies : the Queen refused to recognize

QUEEN VICTORIA

any distinction, some or all changes were the same : she was obstinately determined to part with none of them. Melbourne took the question to the Cabinet, who decided, on sentimental grounds, to support the Queen. Peel treated her attitude as a proof of lack of confidence : she admitted to Melbourne that, when Peel had said he hoped she would give him her confidence, she had made no answer : and he refused to form a Government. The Queen was openly triumphant at the return of the Whigs : she had behaved like a plucky little thing in the eyes of the public, and was cheered as she went to church : King Leopold showed a characteristic lack of judgment in praising his pupil's action : ' When he asked the measure as an expression of your great confidence in him, it was not fair, because *you* had not wished to take him ; he was forced upon you, and therefore, even if you had granted his request, nobody would have seen in it a proof of your confidence in him, but rather a sacrifice to a far-stretched pretence.' Peel, with admirable self-restraint, avoided stating in the House of Commons that he had made it clear to the Queen that he had never contemplated wholesale changes, and the Queen herself confessed in after years that she

QUEEN VICTORIA

had acted on her own responsibility, and very foolishly.

The Queen had continued to take a lively interest in the education of Prince Albert of Coburg. In the spring of 1838 she wrote to King Leopold : ‘ There is another *sujet* which I wish to mention to you, *et que j’ai bien à cœur*, which is, if you would consult Stockmar with respect to the finishing of Albert’s education : he knows best my feelings and wishes on that subject.’ Stockmar was put in charge : he travelled in Italy with the Prince, and made regular reports to the Queen on his character and attainments. But it was not till a year later, when a visit from Prince Albert was under discussion, that she told Lord Melbourne of King Leopold’s wish that they should marry. He did not much like the idea : cousins were not very good things, nor were the Coburgs popular abroad.

‘ I then said, who was there else ? We enumerated the various Princes, of whom not one, I said, would do. For myself, I said, at present *my* feeling was quite against ever marrying. “ It’s a great change in the situation,” he said. “ It’s a very serious thing, both as it concerns the Political effect and your own happiness.” I praised Albert very much ; said he was younger than me. I said Uncle Ernest pressed me much about it ; Lord M. said, if one

QUEEN VICTORIA

was to *make* a man fit for it, one would hardly know what to make ; he mustn't be stupid—nor cunning. I said, by all that I heard, Albert would just be the person.'

To Lord Melbourne's surprise there had been little public expression of anxiety that the Queen should marry, although her uncle, the Duke of Cumberland, her immediate successor, was extremely unpopular. He had become King of Hanover, as a female could not inherit. The Queen herself was becoming nervous at the idea of the Prince's visit : perhaps her acceptance of King Leopold's arrangement had been too hasty : did Albert know about it ? It must be made quite clear before he came that there was no engagement : ' I *may* like him as a friend, and as a *cousin*, and as a *brother*, but not *more* ; and should this be the case (which is not likely), I am *very* anxious that it should be understood that I am *not* guilty of any breach of promise, for I *never* gave any.'

Prince Albert accepted his fate without enthusiasm : any life must have its trials and its drawbacks, and he would have great opportunities. But he stipulated that the matter must be settled one way or the other during his visit : ' if, after waiting, perhaps, for three

QUEEN VICTORIA

years, I should find that the Queen no longer desired the marriage, it would place me in a very ridiculous position, and would, to a certain extent, ruin all the prospects of my future life.' There was a hitch about the date when he and his brother Ernest were to arrive, and the Queen was piqued : ' I think they don't exhibit much *empressement* to come here, which rather shocks me ' : she had been concerned with her own feelings, and had taken her cousin's for granted. When Prince Albert arrived all doubts disappeared : he was so amiable and unaffected, and handsomer than ever. Lord Melbourne on this occasion was required to play the part of a mother rather than a father : ' I asked, if I hadn't better tell Albert of my decision soon, in which Lord M. agreed. How ? I asked, for that in general such things were done the other way—which made Lord M. laugh.' It was not very difficult after all : Albert was kind and happy : and love had made a breach in her egoism : for the first time it occurred to her that exile from his own country and kindred was a sacrifice, and even that she might be unworthy of him.

The interval between the engagement and their marriage on February 10, 1840, was a harassing time for both. The announcement

QUEEN VICTORIA

was on the whole well received, but Prince Albert was felt to be very young and very un-English. As a lady remarked to Lord Melbourne, 'the Prince's character is such as is highly approved at a German university, but which would be subject to some ridicule at ours.' The Queen had been delighted by his obvious indifference to feminine attractions, but Lord Melbourne considered it 'a little dangerous, all that—it's very well if that holds, but it doesn't always.' The Tories, already exasperated by the Queen's open political sympathies, suspected another enemy in the Prince. The proposal that he should be allowed an annual income of £50,000 was defeated by a Conservative and Radical amendment, reducing it to £30,000. This made the Queen more bitter than ever against the Tories, and the Prince took it as a sign that the marriage was unpopular. He was also annoyed by the arrangements for his Household, which the Queen insisted on making herself with the advice of Lord Melbourne ; he had intended to bring over some German friends to mitigate the pains of exile and take charge of his private affairs. And the proposed honeymoon at Windsor appeared to him of unseemly brevity. 'You forget, my dearest Love,' wrote the

QUEEN VICTORIA

Queen, 'that I am the Sovereign, and that business can stop and wait for nothing. Parliament is sitting, and something occurs almost every day, for which I may be required, and it is quite impossible for me to be absent from London: therefore two or three days is already a long time to be absent. I am never easy a moment, if I am not on the spot, and see and hear what is going on, and everybody, including all my Aunts (who are very knowing in all these things), says I must come out after the second day, for, as I must be surrounded by my Court, I cannot keep alone. This is also my own wish in every way.' The prospect was not alluring for a young bridegroom. When he returned to England the Queen was surprised by his agitated state, but Lord Melbourne reassured her: 'That's very natural, I don't wonder at it.' Melbourne also cheered a nervous and gloomy family party the night before the wedding by a description of his new coat, which he declared would attract more attention than anything else at the ceremony.

CHAPTER III

A lusty brace
Of twins may weed her of her folly.

TENNYSON.

VICTORIA, the lonely girl, whose closest friends had been an elderly statesman and a German governess, had gained a companion and a husband whom she adored. They sang and played and sketched and rode and walked together. Albert was perfect. But the Queen had reservations : she had always been sure, she said, that the Prince would never want to interfere in politics, and she impressed her conviction on him at the time of their betrothal. Prince Albert, as Stockmar lamented during their travels, had shown no interest in politics : he even avoided the newspapers : he might have been a happy and intelligent dilettante : if he regretted the reduction of his annuity it was because he could not give the assistance he had expected to artists and men of science. But now it was plain that, if he were not to be content with the part assigned to him of

QUEEN VICTORIA

married lover, he must count for something in his wife's duties as well as her pleasures. Personal ambition he had none : a conscientious—perhaps, in its deep ingenuousness, one may say an un-English—desire to do his duty was the ruling passion of his life. He only wished to be of use, quietly, to his wife : she was heading straight for a great catastrophe, and he saw it from the first.

The Queen had reported to Lord Melbourne before her marriage, 'Stockmar's saying Albert had no idea how high parties ran here ; of its being worse within these last 2 years, and that I was sure it couldn't go on so. " Oh ! it will,—it'll lumber along," ' Lord M. answered. Melbourne was right : it has lumbered along. But Stockmar was right too : years later the Prince remarked that he had never understood the vehemence of English party feeling, till his secretary, returning after leave, found fault with everything he himself and an understudy had done during his absence. He had come to England determined to keep clear from party, and he found that the most virulent partisan of the Whigs was the Queen herself.

Melbourne was disturbed by the situation. His pupil had gone too far : flushed by her wilful triumph over Peel, she was blind to the

QUEEN VICTORIA

fact, patent enough to every one else, that the Whig administration was tottering to its close. Perhaps he was a little conscience-stricken : he had never made her grasp the fundamental principle of the Constitution that as soon as the Opposition take office they become *ipso facto* H.M. Government, but had allowed her to think of the Whigs as her Government, which would be forcibly displaced by the Tories. He had half-consciously drifted back to the old idea of the Prime Minister as the King's servant given to the people, instead of the people's servant given to the King. Had not William IV. reverted to the old theory by arbitrarily dismissing Melbourne himself in 1834 ? Now he realized his mistake : it was time, he said, to hold out the olive branch a little to the Tories. He was also concerned at the Queen's attitude towards Prince Albert. From the first foreign despatches had been sent to the Prince at Melbourne's own suggestion, but the Queen avoided the discussion of English political affairs, pleading indolence rather than want of confidence. Melbourne thought that she was afraid of a conflict of opinion, and that such avoidance would only beget mistrust. He talked the matter over with Stockmar, who feared that the Queen was less ingenuous than

QUEEN VICTORIA

she had been, and that the Lehzen's influence was the root of the evil. As yet no one dared suggest that the formidable lady might fitly return to her native country, but an approaching event helped to improve the Prince's position. In July he had been appointed Regent in the case of the Queen's death, in September he became a Privy Councillor, in November 1840 the Princess Royal was born, and during the Queen's convalescence he transacted business with Ministers on her behalf.

The Queen was beginning to find her husband a support in public affairs. The intimacies of their private life left nothing to be desired, but Melbourne was still troubled by the desperate dullness of the Court. The Prince was obviously bored by the evening routine of double chess : ' He would like to bring literary and scientific people about the Court, vary the society, and infuse a more useful tendency into it.' Since the last of the Stuarts the Court had never been at the head, or even at the centre, of English society. And now the Prince himself was fitted to create a new type of Court—a Weimar with a scientific and industrial bias, a club to which men who had distinguished themselves in any way might always obtain admission. But the Queen's temperament and

QUEEN VICTORIA

lack of education made this impossible. She was proud of her husband's indifference to other women, but a little jealous if he talked much to men : utterly devoid of intellectual curiosity, she would not encourage any interests beyond her own scope. The Court, as a social institution, was and remained a failure : as the royal children grew up it tended to become more and more domestic in character.

Even when it had become clear that dissolution was inevitable Melbourne showed a curious tendency to revert to the superseded theory of Government : after summarizing dissolutions by Charles I., Charles II., Cromwell, Queen Anne and William IV., he said : ' I am afraid that for the first time the Crown would have an Opposition returned smack against it ; and that would be an affront to which I am very unwilling to expose the Crown.' ' This '—adds the Queen—' is very true.'

In May 1841 the Whig Government was defeated on the reduction of the Sugar Duties. As it was obvious that a Tory administration was imminent, both Lord Melbourne and the Prince became anxious about the Queen's attitude : she must not be allowed to treat Peel as she had done on a former occasion.

QUEEN VICTORIA

It was one of Stockmar's sound maxims that matters affecting the interests of the Crown should be the subject of confidential negotiation with the Opposition : he had tried in vain to induce the optimistic Melbourne to adopt that method in the case of the Prince's annuity, and had himself prepared the way for the unanimous acceptance of the regency. Now the Prince, after securing Melbourne's adhesion, sent his secretary to see Peel. The result was a confidential agreement that, if the Queen would inform Peel that the three Ladies prominently connected with members of the Whig administration had resigned their places in the Household, he would not revive the constitutional question. The Prince, who saw that the Queen would not be able to face the approaching crisis without his advice, arranged with Melbourne that he should always be present during audiences, in order that he should be conversant with what Melbourne had actually said to her. Prince Albert was not deficient in psychological observation : ' the Queen always sees what is right at a glance, but if her feelings run contrary she avoids the Prince's arguments, which she feels sure agree with her own, and seeks arguments to support her wishes against her convictions from other people.'

QUEEN VICTORIA

At the end of June Parliament dissolved. The new House met in the middle of August : on the 28th of the month a vote of confidence in the Government was defeated and Melbourne resigned.

The Queen's first reaction was unfortunate : she told the Prince that the Tories would all come to see him and flatter him, but, as they had behaved so badly over his annuity, he must refuse to see them, at any rate for some time. The Prince was aghast : Melbourne had been the Queen's confidential adviser as well as her Prime Minister : now he and Melbourne were agreed that he alone could fill the former position. How could he do this if all intercourse with Tories were forbidden ? Melbourne came to the rescue : he delighted the Queen by his tactful praise of the Prince, repeating it in a written testimonial, which she passed on with pride to her Uncle Leopold.

Lord Melbourne has formed the highest opinion of H.R.H.'s judgment, temper, and discretion, and he cannot but feel a great consolation and security in the reflection that he leaves your Majesty in a situation in which your Majesty has the inestimable advantage of such advice and assistance. Lord Melbourne feels certain that your Majesty cannot do better than have recourse to it, whenever it is needed, and rely upon it with confidence.

QUEEN VICTORIA

At the same time Melbourne warned the Prince that he must be very cautious at first, and not alarm the Queen by letting her suppose that he was carrying on business with Peel without her cognizance.

The first interview with the new Prime Minister passed off to the satisfaction of both parties. The vexed question of the Ladies had been settled out of Court, but the Queen legitimately asserted her rights on another point. During the political crisis of 1839 Melbourne had advised that, on the advent of a new Government, she should insist on controlling the patronage of the Lord Chamberlain's Department : ' This patronage, by being left to uncontrolled exercise of successive Lord Chamberlains, has been administered not only wastefully but perniciously. The physicians to the late King were many of them men of little eminence : the chaplains are still a sorry set.' She now wrote to Peel, directing that the Lord Chamberlain should take her pleasure before making any appointments.

The new Ministers were sworn in. The Queen thought they had cross faces, but Lord Melbourne was sure that they were only shy and embarrassed : ' Everybody praised, in the highest manner, the dignity, propriety, and

QUEEN VICTORIA

kindness of your Majesty's deportment.' Queen Adelaide was equally complimentary, but her niece was annoyed by her comment: 'Our beloved late King's anxious wishes to see Wellington and Peel again at the head of the Administration is now fulfilled. His blessing rests upon you.'

She could have dispensed with a blessing which carried Peel with it—'a close, stiff man,' said Lord Melbourne; 'colder, dryer, more introverted than ever, yet to a close gaze showing the fullest working of a smothered volcano of emotions'—so Bishop Wilberforce saw him in the House of Commons; 'not quite a gentleman,' Mr. Gladstone is reported to have said in after years. This, fortunately, escaped the Prince's attention: many English gentlemen had regarded him with suspicion, if not with contempt, and Peel could appreciate virtues esteemed in a German university. The loan of an illustrated edition of the *Nibelungenlied* was repaid by the present of a new and useful little book by a Quaker, one Bradshaw, and the proffered chairmanship of the Fine Arts Commission. In November 1841 the Prince of Wales was born, an event which brought the Prince into closer contact with the new Government. The gradual improvement

QUEEN VICTORIA

in Peel's position was undoubtedly due to his influence and advice.

None the less both the Prince and Stockmar felt that at any moment a bomb might explode. The Queen insisted on maintaining a secret correspondence with Lord Melbourne. Melbourne was to blame : he should have confined his letters to personal matters, telling the Queen that she must consult her constitutional advisers on political questions : it was open to them to ask his advice if they chose. The memoranda on the subject are amusing : Stockmar and the Prince were in the right, but a German professor and a German undergraduate, earnest and wordy, were not the best persons to handle so delicate a situation—a few ‘But my dear fellows’ intermingled with some good British oaths would have been more effective. ‘Quite an apple-pie opinion,’ remarked Lord Melbourne, pursing his flexible lips over Stockmar’s first memorandum ; but, when it was pointed out to him that the situation had become still more serious, as, by a speech of the previous day, he had established himself leader of the Opposition, he jumped up from his sofa, ‘and went up and down the room in a violent frenzy, exclaiming—“God eternally damn it !” etc., etc. “Flesh and

QUEEN VICTORIA

blood cannot stand this. I cannot be expected to give up my position in the country, neither do I think that it is to the Queen's interest that I should." A few weeks later Stockmar suggested, at a personal interview, that it would be a fitting time to break off the correspondence when the Queen had recovered from her confinement. After another interval a second, lengthier memorandum was administered. Stockmar thought it his duty to bring two incidents to Lord Melbourne's notice. The first must have been carefully staged by the Baron.

Some weeks back I was walking in the streets with Dr. Praetorius (Prince Albert's librarian) when, finding myself opposite the house of one of my friends, it came across my mind to give him a call. Praetorius wanted to leave me, on a conception that, as a stranger, he might obstruct the freedom of our conversation. I insisted, however, on his remaining with me, and we were shown into the drawing-room, where in all there were five of us. For some minutes the conversation had turned on insignificant things, when the person talking to me said quite abruptly: 'So I find the Queen is in daily correspondence with Lord Melbourne.' I replied, 'Who told you this?' The answer was, 'Mrs. Norton: she told me the other evening. Don't you believe that Lord Melbourne has lost his influence over the Queen's mind: he daily

QUEEN VICTORIA

writes to her, and receives as many answers, in which she communicates everything to him.' Without betraying much emotion I said, 'I don't believe a word of it; the Queen may have written once or twice on private matters, but the daily correspondence on all matters is certainly the amplification of a thoughtless and imprudent person, who is not aware of such exaggerated assertions.' My speech was followed by a general silence, after which we talked of other things, and soon took our leave.

Then follows an account of an interview with Peel—probably, in part, at least, apocryphal; it sounds strangely unlike Peel—who talked at him, protesting more than once that, if he ever learnt that the Queen was taking advice elsewhere, he would throw up his position at once. Melbourne sent a bare acknowledgment: the correspondence continued, but not, the conspirators flattered themselves, in its pristine vigour. Peel was either blind or generous, and he showed much generosity in his early dealings with his prejudiced sovereign. As late as June 1843 there are evidences of Melbourne's influence. He thought that the Rebecca riots in South Wales were being too laxly dealt with, and the Queen at once wrote to the Home Secretary that she 'trusts that measures of the greatest severity will be taken, as well to sup-

QUEEN VICTORIA

press the revolutionary spirit as to bring the culprits to immediate trial and punishment.' Letters were exchanged till Melbourne's death, gradually losing all political significance as the Queen's confidence in Peel's administration increased.

In the autumn of 1842 another of the Queen's former mentors disappeared : the Baroness Lehzen, whose interference in domestic matters had been a constant annoyance to Prince Albert, went back to Germany. A year earlier Stockmar had drawn up a memorandum for the Prince on the extravagances and anomalies which had persisted during her superintendence of the Royal Establishment. Windows were dirty because the Lord Chamberlain was responsible for cleaning them inside, and the Woods and Forests outside : rooms were cold because the Lord Steward laid the fire, and the Lord Chamberlain failed to light it : guests wandered about the passages, searching for their rooms : it was no one's duty to look after them. The Prince himself undertook the thankless task of drastic reorganization, entailing the abolition of sinecures. In 1845 Peel announced in Parliament that, owing to the economical administration of the Royal Household, the Czar and the King of France had

QUEEN VICTORIA

been entertained without additional expense to the country.

Peel took office at a time of deep industrial depression and disordered finance. He introduced an Income Tax, not exceeding 7d. in the pound, on all incomes above £150. Income tax had been hitherto a war expedient only, and the sovereign was exempt. The Queen insisted on paying her share, a wise gesture, which did something to mitigate the unpopularity of the measure. Shortly after her accession, it must be remembered, she had shown a generous filial piety in paying the Duke of Kent's debts to the tune of over £50,000.

Prosperity returned in 1843, and by 1844 the Queen had acquired for the first time genuine popularity : the sentimental reception of the young girl, the one protection against the detested King of Hanover, had been followed by distrust of the wilful little Whig. Now when she opened the new Royal Exchange in October the enthusiasm of the crowd exceeded that at the Coronation. The tone of the newspapers had entirely changed. 'They say,' she wrote, 'no Sovereign was ever more loved than I am (I am bold enough to say), and *this* because of our happy domestic home, and the good ex-

QUEEN VICTORIA

ample it presents.' 'Here, after four years,' reported the Prince in triumph to Baron Stockmar—the young couple's last mentor had now left them—'is the recognition of the position we took up from the first. You always said that if Monarchy was to rise in popularity, it could only be by the Sovereign leading an exemplary life, and keeping quite aloof from and above party. Melbourne called this "non-sense." Now Victoria is praised by Lord Spencer the Liberal¹ for giving her Constitutional support to the Tories.'

The Queen herself had become as anxious for the continuance of Peel's administration as she formerly had been for Melbourne's. Thanks to the cross-voting of the Lord John Manners-Disraeli group, the Government were defeated on a motion for giving increased preference to Colonial sugar, but the vote was rescinded a few days later :

'We were really in the greatest possible danger,' she writes to King Leopold, 'of having a resignation of the Government *without knowing to whom to turn*, and this from the recklessness of a handful of foolish *half* "Puseyite" *half* "Young England" people ! I am sure you will agree with me that Peel's resignation would not only be for us (for

¹ At a Liberal meeting at Northampton.

QUEEN VICTORIA

we cannot have a better and a safer Minister), but for the whole country, and for the peace of Europe—a great calamity.’

At the end of 1845 a more serious crisis arose. Irish potatoes had failed, and there had been a very poor harvest in both England and Scotland. Peel came to the conclusion—and the Queen entirely concurred—that the time had come for the total repeal of the Corn Laws. It was a sudden volte-face for his party, and he decided to resign. Lord John Russell attempted to form a Government, but, after unsuccessful negotiations with dissentients among his colleagues, in the words of Disraeli, ‘handed back with courtesy the poisoned chalice to Sir Robert.’ Prince Albert—so he told Stockmar—believed that ‘the crisis, now past, had been a source of real advantage to the Crown, by producing a widely-spread feeling, that amid all the general confusion and heat of party at least one person has remained calm and free from party spirit, this person being the Queen.’ He referred, as proof, to an article in the *Examiner*, the organ of the Radicals :

In the pranks and bunglings of the last three weeks, there is one part which, according to all report, has been played most faultlessly—that of a

QUEEN VICTORIA

Constitutional Sovereign. In the pages of history the directness, the sincerity, the scrupulous observance of constitutional rules, which have marked Her Majesty's conduct in circumstances the most trying will have their place of honour. Unused as we are to deal in homage to royalty, we must add, that never, we believe, was the heart of a monarch so warmly devoted to the interests of a people, and with so enlightened a sense of their interests.

The Queen followed Peel's struggle for the abolition of the Corn Laws with intense interest. Prince Albert, who had not yet grasped the vehemence of English party feeling, attended a debate in January. His presence was construed as giving 'the semblance of the personal sanction of Her Majesty to the Government measure': he never went to the House again. At the end of June 1846 the bill passed both Houses of Parliament, but, on the night of the third reading in the Lords, the Government was defeated on an Irish Coercion Bill by an alliance of Whigs and Protectionists. The second administration of Her Majesty's reign was at an end.

CHAPTER IV

Two heads in council, two beside the hearth,
Two in the tangled business of the world.

TENNYSON.

THE Queen had come to recognize wholeheartedly the merits of her second Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel : he and his colleagues were so safe. Relations with the third, Lord John Russell, were satisfactory on the whole, but less intimate than hers with Melbourne, or Prince Albert's with Peel. But safety was not a characteristic of Lord Palmerston's, the new Foreign Secretary, who was apt to startle his party by sudden, skittish leaps, alarming, but not as dangerous as they looked, because he always managed to land successfully. In 1840 his high-handed dealings with France over the Syrian question had raised a scare of war, which Palmerston himself had rightly judged to be exaggerated. His antics had been less disconcerting in Melbourne's time. Then the Cabinet was, in feeling, a family party—actually he and Melbourne were

QUEEN VICTORIA

brothers-in-law. Under Peel it was a well-organized team. Now it had reverted to the family party tradition, but the father, the easy-going Melbourne, who had managed to patch up differences by a few well-timed expletives, had disappeared from the table. The prim Lord John, who had himself threatened to resign over the Syrian question, was afraid of the colleague whose reputation and abilities made him nevertheless indispensable to the party. There was another factor. Had the Queen been alone, Palmerston might have succeeded in retaining her confidence ; in the first years of her reign he had been, next to Melbourne, her favourite Minister. Now Prince Albert was securely established as her sole confidential adviser, and, from the first, the Prince had made foreign affairs his special study. These two were antipathetic. Palmerston mapped his country, and then took his fences instinctively. The Prince, despite the reassuring episode of his prowess with the Belvoir hounds, was not an intellectual sportsman : he had no intuitions—it was one of his un-English traits—he grounded his opinions upon industrious research and endless memoranda. Palmerston's Italian policy was peculiarly exasperating. To join the revolutionary

QUEEN VICTORIA

Government of France in driving the Austrians out of Italy would, the Queen thought, be a *disgrace*. By September 1848 they have become 'the poor Austrians,' and after a few days' meditation in the peace of Balmoral the Queen decided that some day she would have to tell the Prime Minister that Palmerston must go. The truth was that their views of foreign sovereigns were irreconcilable : for Palmerston they were just foreigners ; for the Queen, even in exile they were monarchs, if not cousins.

Friction, as so often happens, grew hottest on a question of procedure which involved a question of principle. The Queen desired—and she was within her constitutional rights—that all despatches from the Foreign Office should be seen by herself and her adviser, Prince Albert, before they were sent. An arrangement was made that they should go through the Prime Minister, who should receive the Queen's comments, and transmit them to the Foreign Secretary. In this way a double check would be imposed on Palmerston, who—as a matter of fact—had been in the habit of acting and writing without consulting the Prime Minister or any one else. The method was unimpeachable, but Palmerston still found

QUEEN VICTORIA

excuses for violating the terms of the arrangement : there were so many despatches—28,000 in the year—and sometimes the delay of a few hours might be fatal.

The first explosion came at the end of 1849. A claim against the Greek Government by Don Pacifico, a British subject, had been dragging on for two years, when Palmerston drafted a despatch, of which the Queen desired two modifications. The first was adopted, a second made, not entirely in her sense, by the Cabinet, and the despatch was sent without being again submitted to her. Stockmar, who was in England for his second visit during the Russell administration, produced on March 12, 1850, the memorandum which was to regulate the relations between the Crown and the Foreign Secretary for the future.

The least the Queen has a right to require of her Minister is :

1. That he will distinctly state what he proposes in a given case, in order that the Queen may know as distinctly to what she has to give her royal sanction.

2. Having given once her sanction to a measure, the Minister who, in the execution of such measure, alters or modifies it arbitrarily, commits an act of

QUEEN VICTORIA

dishonesty towards the Crown, which the Queen has an undoubted constitutional right to visit with the dismissal of that Minister.

These dicta were held in reserve. Meanwhile Palmerston's behaviour went from bad to worse. He was inattentive : he was disrespectful : he was positively disobedient. But he was also indispensable to the very weak Government : he was popular in the country, and his temperament and the easiness of his political principles made him an equally possible leader, if the Whigs once lost him, for the Tories or the Radicals. As a matter of tactics, therefore, the Prime Minister was bound to support him, and, as a matter of principle, the same Prime Minister was bound to watch with the jealous eye of a Whig of 1688 any encroachment of the Crown. It was becoming plain that a personal conflict was involved between the Queen and one of her Ministers, the Minister gay, self-confident, and wholly English, the Crown nervous, exasperated, and half-German. The Queen was equally delighted with a Prussian victory over the Danes, and an Austrian victory over the Italians : ' I could work myself up to a great excitement about these exploits, for there is nothing I admire more than great military exploits and daring.'

QUEEN VICTORIA

But the House of Commons, after a night of splendid oratory, resolved that Palmerston 'had maintained the honour and dignity of the country, and in times of unexampled difficulty, had preserved peace between England and the various nations of the world.' Palmerston's speech, the Prime Minister told the Queen, 'was one of the most masterly ever delivered, going through the details of transactions in various parts of the world, and appealing from time to time to great principles of justice and of freedom.'

The Queen was beginning to lose her judgment and her self-control : she was ' personally convinced ' that Palmerston was secretly planning a Russian descent on Schleswig, with a German revolution and a general war to follow. On the 12th of August the Stockmar memorandum was taken out of its pigeon-hole, and administered through Lord John to Palmerston, who accepted it with the remark that he might require an additional clerk or two. But no increase of the Foreign Office staff could ensure a change of heart in the Secretary : next month he offended again. General Haynau, notorious for his unspeakable brutality in the Hungarian War, came to London, was recognized while visiting Barclay's

QUEEN VICTORIA

brewery, mauled by the draymen, and removed without serious injuries under police escort. The Austrian Ambassador demanded an apology, and Palmerston drafted one, adding that the General had evinced a want of propriety in coming to England. The Queen, with Lord John's concurrence, gave instructions that the censure of the General should be omitted, only to find that the despatch had already been sent. Palmerston, as usual, pleaded urgency, and also expressed his opinion of General Haynau : Metternich himself had told him not to venture, the Austrian Ambassador had told him to cut off his moustaches : the Salt Hill murderer and the Mannings were nothing compared with him, and he was already known in Vienna as General Hyaena. In short, as the Queen said, 'he is not sorry for what has happened, and makes a merit of sympathising with the draymen of the brewery and the Chartist Demonstrations.'¹ Lord John insisted upon the withdrawal and alteration of the note, and Palmerston agreed, after threatening resignation.

¹ The Queen seems to have used the word Chartist as some people now use Bolshevik : the draymen and Lord Palmerston would have been equally surprised at the imputation of Chartist sympathies.

QUEEN VICTORIA

The end of 1851 brought a final crisis. Palmerston expressed approval of Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état*, although the Government policy was that of strict neutrality, and Lord John at last insisted on his resignation. On the 23rd of December the Queen wrote in exultation to King Leopold :

I have the greatest pleasure in announcing to you a piece of news which I know will give you as much satisfaction and relief as it does to us, and will do to the *whole* of the world. *Lord Palmerston is no longer Foreign Secretary.*

On the 3rd of February, 1852, Palmerston completely failed to justify his conduct to the House of Commons: he had never believed, though he had been warned, that the Queen's memorandum would be brought up against him, and, for once in his life, he was crushed. Lord Aberdeen told Lord Normanby, our Ambassador in Paris, that he really pitied Palmerston, so complete was his overthrow. On February the 16th at a breakfast party, Macaulay remarked, 'Après avoir été l'apôtre des idées libérales, il a été le martyr du pouvoir arbitraire.' 'Mon Dieu !' said Thiers, 'et c'est un Anglais qui a dit ça.' A good many other Englishmen were saying the same thing, and on

February the 20th the object of all these triumphs and regrets turned the Government out on a Militia Bill.

The doctrine that a Ministry is responsible to the House of Commons had grown very rapidly since 1830, and especially since King William's attempt to govern with a minority Cabinet in 1834. So long as there were two clear parties in the House of Commons, and an acknowledged leader of each, the prerogative of the Crown to select its own First Minister operated almost automatically, but from 1846, and still more from 1852, the party system was in temporary collapse, and the function of the Crown was not so much to send for a Prime Minister as to find some one who would undertake to be Prime Minister. In such a conjuncture George III. would have plunged into intrigue, and would have restored the power of the Crown by composing out of the fragments a sufficiently submissive Ministry. Neither the Queen nor the Prince ever stooped to intrigue; and the 'fearless straightforwardness,' which she claimed for herself, was universally recognized. But the party position inevitably emphasized the consequence of the Crown: on the other hand, the authority of a Prime Minister, never quite

QUEEN VICTORIA

sure of a majority, was weak in face of the Royal permanence.

The Crown, in this particular phase, might be defined as the interacting personalities of Stockmar, Prince Albert and the Queen. The Prince, if less experienced, was more solidly informed than Palmerston, more European, but European with a dynastic and, above all, a German bias, and the position into which he was gradually being drawn, less by his own desire than by Stockmar's tutorship, by the Queen's adoring submission, and by the reactions of the party situation, might be interpreted as that of controller of foreign policy, above the Cabinet and the Foreign Secretary. Perhaps not of foreign policy only. In fact he had become a sort of super-civil-servant, both in position and in method. If the Crown seems at times to be getting very near the edge of what is permissible, when, for example, it begins to criticize the composition of Cabinet Committees, and to suggest the details of franchise and distribution bills, it must be remembered that the Court atmosphere was not one in which ideas could be lightly dropped in casual conversation: the Prince's stiff, guarded manner and dislike of society had restricted his influence to memoranda

QUEEN VICTORIA

and formal interviews which, as Peel discovered to his consternation, became the subject of fresh memoranda. It was his misfortune that he could not help being portentous.

CHAPTER V

One walk'd between his wife and child,
With measur'd footfall firm and mild,
And now and then he gravely smiled.

The prudent partner of his blood
Lean'd on him, faithful, gentle, good,
Wearing the rose of womanhood.

TENNYSON.

IN another field the Prince's activities were unimpeachable. An excellent speaker of a somewhat solid type, interested in every effort for the advancement of learning, the extension of commerce, and—himself a model landlord—the improvement of working-class conditions, he was always ready to lay foundation-stones and open docks. His crowning achievement, both in idea and execution, was the Great Exhibition of 1851.

So much had already happened since the Queen's accession, so much was still to happen during that long widowhood, which, with stamps, coins and statues, has perpetuated the image of an old lady, that it takes an effort to remember that at the time of the Great Exhibition, in itself a symbol and a com-

QUEEN VICTORIA

memoration of the stability of the monarchy, she was still a young matron, only thirty-two. After the birth of the Princess Royal she had written to King Leopold :

I think, dearest Uncle, you cannot *really* wish me to be the ‘Mamma d’une *nombreuse* famille,’ for I think you will see with me the great inconvenience a *large* family would be to us all, and particularly to the country, independent of the hardship and inconvenience to myself; men never think, at least seldom think, what a hard task it is for us women to go through this *very often*. God’s will be done, and if He decrees that we are to have a great number of children, why we must try to bring them up as useful and exemplary members of society.

She had accepted God’s will cheerfully—in 1851 she was the mother of seven children—and while they were young and comparatively inexpensive, the country accepted it cheerfully too. The duties of a mother were more congenial than those of a Queen : despatches and interviews with Ministers were no longer an excitement and a pleasure : she leant more and more on the Prince. ‘Albert grows daily fonder and fonder of politics and business,’ she told King Leopold, ‘and is so wonderfully *fit* for both—such perspicacity and such *courage*—and I grow daily to dislike them both more and

QUEEN VICTORIA

more. We women are not *made* for governing—and if we are good women, we must *dislike* these masculine occupations ; but there are times which force one to take *interest* in them *mal gré bon gré*, and *I* do, of course, *intensely*.' The Prince saw to that : however much he might draft and advise he was careful never to absorb her function : she must retain sufficient interest and be fed with sufficient information to speak the last authoritative word. But domestic life absorbed her more and more, the children's welfare, their lessons, the peace of Osborne, the pleasures, pastoral and feudal, of Balmoral, journeys abroad with the Prince, even though their object might be primarily political.

'We have come to regard the Crown,' writes Bagehot, 'as the head of our *morality*. The virtues of Queen Victoria and the virtues of George III. have sunk deep into the popular heart. We have come to believe that it is natural to have a virtuous sovereign, and that the domestic virtues are as likely to be found on thrones as they are eminent when there.' This view of the Crown had suffered an eclipse during the regency and the reigns of George IV. and William IV. Stockmar and Prince Albert rightly judged that it was essential to a stable and successful constitutional monarchy, despite

QUEEN VICTORIA

Melbourne's fears that their damned morality would ruin everything. Their influence on the Queen re-created the illusion—and Bagehot's cautious words suggest that it is an illusion—that the people take their morality from the Crown. The groundwork was those canons of Northern Protestant morality, common to England and Germany, which, as the letters of Humbug Leopold read in conjunction with his life indicate, could be in Germany more sentimental, more self-conscious, and, above all, more hypocritical than anything recorded of the English Victorians. In England the canons had to be adapted to the peculiar circumstances of an intensely competitive age—the age of self-help and mutual improvement. Here Prince Albert was at home, partly by temperament, partly by upbringing, and most of all because he had made a deep, philosophic study of the times, such as only a German would undertake. A lounging, light-hearted way of taking things and people as they come, inculcated by Melbourne, was replaced by an exemplary tutorial attitude, dignified and gracious, but without geniality, and without real sympathy. Queen Elizabeth had given emotional significance to the old legal maxim, *nus et nostre pæple* : the Queen and the Prince

QUEEN VICTORIA

substituted duty, conscientiously discharged, for love, and expected in return not love but obedience and appreciative expressions of loyalty. There was one exception—their life in the Highlands. From the first both were attracted by the simplicity and responsiveness of the Highlanders : they unbent, and were at ease, gay and friendly. But Balmoral was a holiday, an expansion of domesticity. Otherwise the fusion was incomplete : in the popular conception of the Constitution the Crown was still something of a foreign body : and the nervous and dilatory preliminaries of the Russian War created a sudden and frenzied suspicion. There are old people still living who remember the rumour in 1853 that the Queen and the Prince had been arrested as traitors and taken to the Tower. The charge was, of course, absurd, but the maddest Protestant would never have suspected Elizabeth of betraying England to Philip of Spain. It might even be argued that the Crown conformed all too closely to the hesitations and deviations of Lord Aberdeen's Coalition Cabinet, as if the determination of the Queen and the vigilance of Prince Albert had lost their keenness when Palmerston was no longer there to keep them alert.

QUEEN VICTORIA

The meekness of Lord Aberdeen and the curious composition of a Government in which the Peelites with 30 seats had 6 places, and the Whigs with 120 seats had the same, ripened the Stockmar-Albert theory of the Constitution, and masked its logical weakness. There was an unresolved antinomy, which revealed itself as soon as the two-party system re-emerged. To state this theory briefly : the Government for the time being was *ipso facto* the Queen's Government, but it should be in truth the Queen's Government, not a purely Ministerial Government with, as Stockmar put it, a Mandarin King at the head. Were dignity, integrity and sympathy enough to save the monarch from the mandarin position? No. His experience due to his permanence, and also the fact, on which the Prince constantly laid stress, that he must be above all party considerations, gave him a right, and even a duty, to form a policy of his own. This claim might have developed into a pretension on the part of the Crown to rule as a third party, neither Government nor Opposition. Prince Albert states, for example, in a memorandum that :

Lord Aberdeen renounced one of his chief sources of strength in the Cabinet, by not making it appar-

QUEEN VICTORIA

ent that he requires the sanction of the Crown to the course proposed by the Cabinet, and has to justify his advice by argument before it can be adopted, and that it does not suffice to come to a decision at the table of the Cabinet.

This could be read as meaning that the Crown has the right to a personal approval, and disapproval, of the policy advised by its Ministers. But, stated in these terms, the right was illusory, as both parties knew in their hearts that the Crown could no longer venture on dismissing a Prime Minister, as William IV. had dismissed Melbourne, and that a Prime Minister could bring the Crown to heel by threatening resignation, as Lord Derby actually did during his second administration in 1859. What the events of this decade did evolve was, not a negative voice on the decisions of the Cabinet, but a suspensory voice in their deliberations.

The Crimean War and the French Alliance, followed swiftly by the Indian Mutiny, created an atmosphere in which the constitutional status of the Crown was lost in the representative function of the Queen. Military glory always made a strong appeal to her—she prided herself on being a soldier's daughter—but her upbringing as a girl and the German rigidity

QUEEN VICTORIA

of the Court, except during the Highland holidays, had prevented her from coming into any real contact with her people. If King William had succeeded in capturing her from the Duchess of Kent, he would probably have marched her up and down St. James's Street on his arm, noisily introducing the little thing to every old admiral he met. Now, for the first time, she stepped sympathetically out of her glass bell, not only reviewing her troops when they went to war, but following both their achievements and their sufferings, and honouring and comforting those who returned. She had entered a new world of interest in and sympathy with individuals outside her own immediate circle.

Early in 1855 Lord Aberdeen's Government was defeated on a motion for a Committee of Enquiry into the Conduct of the War, and Lord Palmerston became Prime Minister. During the previous autumn Prince Albert had paid a visit to the Emperor Louis Napoleon in camp at Boulogne. They discussed politics, past and present, very freely. The Prince felt the Emperor sympathetic: his education at Augsburg had given him 'a German turn of thought,' though he was ignorant of philosophy and history, and conducted his public affairs

QUEEN VICTORIA

with a deplorable lack of organization and application. In April 1855 the Emperor and the Empress Eugénie were entertained in return at Buckingham Palace. The Queen also thought the Emperor 'as *unlike a Frenchman* as possible, being much more *German* than French in character.' She was at once captivated and mystified by his personality :

That he is a very *extraordinary* man, with great qualities there can be *no* doubt—I might almost say a mysterious man. He is evidently possessed of *indomitable courage, unflinching firmness of purpose, self-reliance, perseverance, and great secrecy* ; to this should be added, a great reliance on what he calls his *Star*, and a belief in omens and incidents as connected with his future destiny, which is almost romantic—and at the same time he is endowed with wonderful *self-control, great calmness, even gentleness*, and with a *power of fascination*, the effect of which upon all those who become more intimately acquainted with him is *most sensibly* felt.

His past actions make her doubtful whether he has a strong moral sense, yet :

My impression is, that in all these apparently inexcusable acts, he has invariably been guided by the belief that he is *fulfilling a destiny* which God has *imposed* upon him, and that, though cruel or harsh in themselves, they were *necessary* to obtain the result which he considered *himself* as *chosen* to

QUEEN VICTORIA

carry out, and *not* acts of *wanton* cruelty or injustice ; for it is impossible to know him, and not to see that there is much that is truly amiable, kind, and honest in his character. Another remarkable and important feature in his composition is, that everything he says or expresses is the *result* of deep reflection and of settled purpose, and not merely *des phrases de politesse*, consequently when we read the words used in his speech made in the City, we may feel sure that he *means* what he says ; and therefore I would rely with confidence on his behaving honestly and faithfully towards us.

‘ I shall be curious,’ she adds to her lengthy study of the Emperor’s character, ‘ to see if, after the lapse of time, my opinion and estimate of it has been the right one.’ Future events indeed justified her caution. By the Empress both she and the Prince were altogether charmed.

In August the Queen and Prince Albert and their two elder children had a gorgeous reception in Paris. To King Leopold she wrote from St. Cloud :

I am *delighted, enchanted, amused, and interested*, and think I never saw anything more *beautiful* and gay than Paris—or more splendid than all the Palaces. Our reception is *most* gratifying—for it is enthusiastic and really kind in the highest degree ; and Maréchal Magnan (whom you know well) says that such a reception as I have received *every day here*

QUEEN VICTORIA

is much greater and much more enthusiastic even than Napoleon on his return from his victories had received ! Our entrance into Paris was a scene which was *quite feenhaft*, and which could hardly be seen anywhere else ; was quite *overpowering*—splendidly decorated — illuminated — immensely crowded—and 60,000 troops out—from the Gare de Strasbourg to St. Cloud, of which 20,000 Gardes Nationales, who had come great distances to see me.

The Emperor was more fascinating than ever : ‘ I know *no* one who puts me more at my ease, or to whom I felt more inclined to talk unreservedly, or in whom involuntarily I should be more inclined to confide, than the Emperor!’ Characteristically she insisted on telling him all about her friendship for the exiled Orleans family, and discussing his own harsh treatment of them and his reasons for it :

A curious conversation, but which I was greatly relieved to have had, for with my feelings of sincerity, I could not bear that there should be anything between us, now that the Alliance is so firmly and intimately established, and still more since we personally are on so intimate and friendly a footing.

The visit was in every way a shining success. It is one of the many testimonies to the Queen’s presence and dignity and complete unself-

QUEEN VICTORIA

consciousness that, stout, small, plain and tastelessly dressed, she should have impressed a Paris crowd, even in comparison with the elegant and exquisite Eugénie : the Empress, we are told, constantly touched her coiffure and her dress ; the Queen kept her hands still. ‘ On l’a trouvée parfaitement gracieuse, toujours reine, toujours droite, tournure charmante. Voilà la vérité vraie, car c’est tout le monde qui le redit.’ So wrote Princess Lieven, at that time by no means well-disposed to the English Court.

CHAPTER VI

Thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece.

ZECHARIAH.

FROM 1848 onwards the attention of the country, at once prosperous and excited, was diverted from domestic to foreign affairs, and the temporary abeyance of the party system brought into relief the contrast, and sometimes the clash, between statesmen, whatever their party, who had been trained before the Reform Bill and those who had learnt their business after it. Lord Lansdowne, whose advice was taken at every turn in the fifties, had been a member of Fox's Cabinet in 1806; Lord Aberdeen had grown up in Downing Street under the eye of Pitt; Lord John had never got beyond 1831; and Lord Palmerston's abounding vitality was exercised in enforcing on a new world the foreign policy of Canning. It was time for a new generation to take the field, and the new generation was ready. Mr. Gladstone, blown one way by his sym-

pathies, another by his antipathies, and steadily urged by the arguments with which he translated his sympathies and antipathies into moral impulses, was deciding to become a Liberal, and another voice, long known and hated and suspected in Parliament, was beginning to be heard at Court : ' Mr. Gladstone gave only a very guarded approval to the Minute, which he treated as insignificant. It was not a happy effort, and the debate, for a while revived by his interposition, continued to languish until this hour (nine o'clock), with successive relays of mediocrity, until it yielded its last gasp in the arms of Mr. Slaney.' Mr. Disraeli speaking. Between the two, all the advantages were on the side of the Scotsman as against the Jew. He was extraordinarily competent : he was obviously a good man : he was the favourite pupil of our good Peel, and, while Prince Albert lived, it was immaterial if his expositions of Free Trade contained parentheses in favour of Protection. The Crown pressed him for the Chancellorship of the Exchequer in 1853, after Mr. Disraeli had shown that, in spite of his heredity, his finance was not equal to his eloquence. The Crown was right, and the budget of 1853, the last of the great Peel budgets, not only established the reputation

QUEEN VICTORIA

of Mr. Gladstone as the first financier in the country, but created the position of Chancellor of the Exchequer as the second post in the Government.¹ Against Disraeli were the memory of his onslaughts against Peel, and the equal distrust he inspired in the old Conservatism, which he had abandoned, and the new Conservatism, which he aspired both to create and to lead. One thing he had—‘that simultaneous conspectus of the relations between persons and things,’ the absence of which his great rival deplored in himself.

With one brief eclipse in 1858-59, the reaction from excessive popularity, when Lord Derby and Disraeli came into office for a few uneasy months, Palmerston was Prime Minister from 1855 till his death in 1865. It was a mellower Palmerston, successful and satisfied, but still suffering from his incurable inability to see European problems as a whole, to pursue the *staid* policy, which the Crown desiderated, or to view with becoming reverence the settlement of 1815, which gave Austria her title to her Italian possessions, and the German Princes (including the House of Coburg) their titles to their estates. Any disturbance of the

¹ It is interesting to note that the Treasury as a Board met for the last time in 1856.

QUEEN VICTORIA

settlement, except by way of European agreement, opened the door to an endless procession of disasters, culminating in a new Napoleonic Empire with a dependent Sweden controlling the Baltic, a dependent Italy in the Mediterranean, revolution in Russia, Poland and Hungary, and the frontiers of French dominion undefined. 'All this,' says the Queen, 'is probably not thought of by our journalists, but requires the serious attention of our statesmen.' To Palmerston, who had the advantage of remembering the Sovereign of the Tuileries as an adventurer in King Street, St. James's, all this probably sounded like the fantasies of a German professor, but the shadow of the Mystery Man fell on England too. He was turning to Russia for an alliance, he was fortifying Cherbourg : the volunteers sprang to arms. Really he was not looking across the Channel at all : he had made up his mind, or Cavour and the Carbonari had made it up for him, that his destiny lay in Italy. An answering project grew in Prince Albert's mind that, when once the French army was deep enough in Italy, a German army should range itself along the Rhine. But the three, whom time had at last brought together, Palmerston, Lord John, and Mr. Gladstone, were not thinking

QUEEN VICTORIA

about the Rhine. And, of the three, Lord John was the hardest to manage. 'The Queen,' she wrote, 'is determined to hold to her neutrality in the Italian intrigues, revolutions, and wars. It is true, Lord John says, "it becomes a great power like Great Britain to preserve the peace of Europe, by throwing her great weight into the scale which has justice on its side." But where justice lies, admits of every variety of opinion.' In the eyes of the three it admitted of no variety at all. Lord John 'will therefore only venture to say that the doctrines of the Revolution of 1688, doctrines which were supported by Mr. Fox, Mr. Pitt, the Duke of Wellington, Lord Castlereagh, Mr. Canning, and Lord Grey, can hardly be abandoned in these days by your Majesty's present advisers. According to those doctrines, all power held by Sovereigns may be forfeited by misconduct, and each nation is the judge of its own internal government.' Upon which the Queen characteristically asked what the Revolution of 1688 had to do with the matter. The Foreign Secretary, in language which it is not easy to distinguish from insolence, rejoined that, as unfortunately he did not partake her opinions in regard to Italy, he was unwilling to obtrude

QUEEN VICTORIA

on her unnecessary statements of his views. 'Whatever may be the consequence, the liberation of the Italian people from a foreign yoke is, in the eyes of Lord Palmerston and Lord John Russell, an increase of freedom and happiness at which as well-wishers to mankind they cannot but rejoice.' The Queen was justly incensed, and Palmerston had the pleasure of returning the rap which Lord John had administered to him ten years before.

Meantime the views of the Crown were hardening. The Queen wrote that the attempts which Sardinia was suspected of contemplating were 'morally bad and reprehensible.' Lord John was sorry that he could not agree : anyhow the despatch had gone. While it was on its way to Turin, Garibaldi was on his way to Marsala, and Lord John pointed the comparison with the events of 1688. On the 19th of August 1860 he crossed the straits. Europe was aghast, and, producing for the last time the well-worn precedent of 1688, Lord John wrote the famous despatch, which was transcribed and wept over from one end of Italy to the other :

Her Majesty's Government do not feel justified in declaring that the people of Southern Italy had

QUEEN VICTORIA

not good reason for throwing off their allegiance to their former governments. Her Majesty's Government, therefore, cannot pretend to blame the King of Sardinia for assisting them.

The Crown could only record its regret in a letter to Stockmar that, instead of upholding the moral law, Lord John had increased the general confusion of what is legal and right, and its suspicion that his motive was a craving to make himself conspicuous. The Queen's view of the Italian revolution was simply and picturesquely expressed in a letter to her daughter many years later : ' To me King Emmanuel has never been the same since he undermined his own uncle's kingdom, and took that as well as other people's, near relations of his own.' In one of his rare unguarded moments the Prince Consort spoke his mind to the Lord Chancellor : ' We Germans have no boundaries : our only boundary is the Quadrilateral.' ' This, I fear, must be true,' comments Mr. Gladstone, ' and, if so, is sad enough.'

' Kings are all individuals, this or that king : there is no species of kings.' So said Selden. This truth, so far as Europe was concerned, the Queen never grasped : she was too much entangled in her dynastic sympathies to share,

QUEEN VICTORIA

or even realize, the appeal which the struggle for Italian freedom made not only to Lord Palmerston and Lord John Russell, but to the English nation at large. But there was now another field in which she was completely isolated, and therefore free. After the suppression of the Indian Mutiny, a bill was introduced terminating the joint jurisdiction of the East India Company and the Board of Control, and already a soft breeze from the East was fanning her imagination. The bill was 'only the antechamber of an imperial palace ; and your Majesty would do well to deign to consider the steps which are now necessary to influence the opinions and affect the imagination of the Indian populations. The name of your Majesty ought to be impressed upon their native life. Royal Proclamations, Courts of Appeal in their own land, and other institutions, forms, and ceremonies, will tend to this great result.' The draft proclamation lacked the imperial glow :

The Queen would be glad if Lord Derby would write it himself in his excellent language, bearing in mind that it is a female Sovereign who speaks to more than 100,000,000 of Eastern people on assuming the direct Government over them after a bloody

QUEEN VICTORIA

civil war, giving them pledges which her future reign is to redeem, and explaining the principles of her Government. Such a document should breathe feelings of generosity, benevolence, and religious feeling, pointing out the privileges which the Indians will receive in being placed on an equality with the subjects of the British Crown, and the prosperity following in the train of civilisation.

She specially insisted that the passage dealing with native religions should open with the words : ‘ Firmly relying ourselves on the truth of Christianity, and acknowledging with gratitude the solace of religion, we disclaim alike the right and desire to impose our convictions on any of our subjects.’ A subtle difference is apparent between the Queen’s attitude towards India and that towards her home dominions. In England, perhaps still more in Ireland, she thought of herself as the guardian of the Constitution against encroachments by Parliament, or Ministers, especially against Ministers who bent their sails too readily to the new wind of Democracy. In India she felt herself the guardian of people and Princes even against their English rulers, ‘ bumptious and not understanding how to deal with these people,’ ‘ people who merely get appointed from passing an examination.’

QUEEN VICTORIA

Now, too, a family was growing up to display on a larger scene the representative quality which the monarchy had begun to assume in England. When, almost simultaneously, the Prince of Wales was opening a bridge across the St. Lawrence, and Prince Alfred was laying the foundation-stone of the Cape Town break-water, the Prince Consort felt that his sons were preserving a happy balance between imperial and dynastic interests. In January, 1858, the Princess Royal was married to Prince Frederick William of Prussia. 'The Nation look upon her,' wrote the Queen, 'as Cobden said, as "*England's* daughter," and as if they married a child of their own, which is *very* satisfactory, and shows, in spite of a few newspaper follies and absurdities, how really *sound* and *monarchical* everything is in this country.' She was the favourite child of the Prince Consort. Melbourne's fears were falsified: the Queen remained, in Melbourne's sense, the only woman in the Prince's life, but this daughter gave him an intellectual comprehension of which his wife was incapable. Her mind was of his own pattern: she could assimilate teaching on Stockmar's lines, the Prince's idea of the perfect education, whereas his eldest son was a disappointment and a

QUEEN VICTORIA

perplexity : the most elaborate memoranda failed to do their work. His letters to her, affectionate, instructive, and full of that playfulness peculiar to earnest persons, give the best notion of what it was in him that his few intimates found lovable as well as worthy of respect.

The Prince had never been robust, and for the past two or three years a life of constant and too sedentary occupation had told on his constitution. The Queen herself complained that unremitting application to business had affected the gentleness of his temper. By the autumn of 1861 it was clear, though the Queen blindly persisted that his health was better than it had been in the preceding winters, that he was losing his hold on life : indeed he was utterly worn out and had no wish to live. The American War was raging, and at the end of November an untoward incident occurred. Two Southern Envoys and their secretaries were seized on a British steamer and forcibly removed. A draft despatch, dealing with this breach of international law, was prepared for our Ambassador at Washington. The Prince thought the despatch provocative in tone and likely to involve England in war. Though so ill that he could scarcely hold

QUEEN VICTORIA

a pen, he drafted another, more conciliatory, in order to give the United States Government the opportunity of disavowing their agent's action. On the 14th of December he died.

CHAPTER VII

But open converse is there none,
So much the vital spirits sink
To see the vacant chair, and think,
'How good ! how kind ! and he is gone.'

TENNYSON.

AT the age of forty-two the Queen was left a widow, and the mother of nine children, of whom the youngest, Princess Beatrice, was four years old. Any death in her own immediate circle had always seemed to her a terrible and almost incredible event : now, stricken by the worst blow of all, she was in a passion of despair. The emotional crisis was not only severe, but unusually protracted. Her joint life with her husband and her devotion to him had delivered her from the growing habit of egoism ; now she was thrown back on herself, and egoism reasserted itself in her grief. Her self-pity and constant appeals for commiseration for years after the Prince Consort's death, her exaggerated accounts of ill-health—the suggestion that work is wholesome infuriates her, and, if she is congratulated on looking well, it is only feverishness from undue exertion—are irritat-

QUEEN VICTORIA

ing. But it may be said—once for all—that the Queen's letters are not a fair criterion either of her character or of her abilities. Just as portraits fail to convey the graciousness and dignity to which there is abundant testimony, so the letters leave unexpressed a real nobility, which commanded the respect and admiration of those who came into contact with her. She remembered that the Prince had reproved her abandoned grief after the Duchess of Kent's death, and strove to be calm: 'All was beautiful, simple, noble, touching to the very last degree,' wrote Mr. Gladstone, the Minister who she felt had entered most fully into her sorrows, after an audience. She clung fiercely to the Prince's memory :

I am also anxious to repeat *one* thing, and *that one* is *my firm* resolve, *my irrevocable decision*, viz. that *his* wishes—*his* plans—about everything, *his* views about *every* thing are to be *my law* ! And no *human power* will make me swerve from *what he* decided and wished . . . I am *also determined* that *no one* person, may *he* be ever so good, ever so devoted among my servants—is to lead or guide or dictate to me. I know *how he* would disapprove it.

She set herself to read all the papers which the Prince would have read, and she expressed the opinions which she believed would have been

QUEEN VICTORIA

his. This in itself brought little comfort ; she pitied herself for being not only a widow, but a Queen ; yet work, broken by periods of prayer in the Prince's room, was in a sense an imaginative prolongation of her married life : she talked much of his spirit as still with her. At least the old routine of work was unbroken, and this, her grandfather's refuge in his less fatal times of disturbance, no doubt helped to preserve her mental balance.

The sympathy of the nation was awakened : their Queen's grief was another vindication of the sanctity of married life. And her grief, by widening her sympathies, brought her nearer to them : such gestures as the letter to the widows of the Hartley Colliery disaster, and the more famous letter to Mrs. Lincoln, humanized the Sovereign in her own eyes and those of her people. But the world does not consist entirely of widows, and, as time went on and she refused to fulfil her representative functions, murmurs arose. This withdrawal from public life was even more trying for her Ministers than the ghostly dependence on the Prince Consort and constant reiteration of his views. Her refusal any longer to reside at Buckingham Palace made intercourse less frequent and extremely inconvenient for them.

QUEEN VICTORIA

Before her marriage, when she had enjoyed the amusements and excitement of London life, she had told Lord Melbourne that Windsor disagreed with her : ‘ He said very funnily, “ You have got some fixed fancies ; Your Majesty has settled in your mind certain things.” ’ Now it was a fixed fancy, reinforced by appeals to her complaisant medical advisers, that London shattered her nerves, and that a prolonged stay at Osborne and two annual visits to Balmoral were essential to her health : the rest of the year she spent at Windsor. Political crises were not allowed to affect her habits : even Palmerston’s death failed to bring her back from Balmoral.

It might have been supposed that the Queen in her loneliness would turn for support to her eldest son, who was twenty at the time of his father’s death, but her treatment of the Prince of Wales was her most disastrous tribute to the Prince Consort’s memory. As has been said, he had not responded to the system of education devised for him by Stockmar and Stockmar’s pupil, which entailed constant supervision and exhortation, and left him no freedom of intercourse with young men of his own age, even while he was at the universities. The Queen, whose fond hope in his infancy had

QUEEN VICTORIA

been that he would become another Albert, an exact replica of his father, was so imbued with the idea of that father's disappointment that she denied him the natural position of responsibility expected for him both by her Ministers and by himself. She seems even to have held him responsible in a measure for the Prince Consort's death, as she speaks two years later of 'the *still* worse anniversary of those *news* which broke my Angel's heart.' The reference is to an unsatisfactory account from Cambridge, necessitating a visit from the Prince Consort, who caught cold on the journey. She constantly reproached her son for his restlessness and love of pleasure, but, apart from allowing him to represent her at public functions, refused him facilities for serious occupation, even after he had fulfilled his father's wish by marrying the Princess Alexandra. He was not to make speeches, or preside over committees, and he and the Princess were to be limited to five dinner-parties a year at houses approved by the Queen. Of one of her rare appearances in London on her way through the Park to the station, she wrote : 'Everyone said that the difference shown, when *I* appeared, and (when) Bertie and Alix drive, was *not* to be described. Naturally for

QUEEN VICTORIA

them no one stops, or *runs*, as they always did, and *do* doubly now, for *me*.' In 1864 Lord Russell suggested sending to him despatches of interest, but the Queen objected 'to the *principle*, which would be thus admitted, of separate and independent communication between the Prince of Wales and her Government': she would herself see that he had as much information as was suitable for him. Although she was constantly talking of her own speedy demise, she systematically excluded him from the knowledge and position which should prepare him to take her place.

The Queen's marriage had been, in fact, a conversion. 'The Queen's letters between '37 and '40,' she writes, 'are *not* pleasing, and indeed rather painful to herself. It was the least sensible and satisfactory time in her whole life, and she must therefore destroy a great many. That life of mere amusement, flattery, excitement and mere politics had a bad effect (as it must have on every one) on her *naturally* simple and serious nature. But *all* changed after '40.' The episode of marriage had left her with new standards of behaviour, public and private. Was it not a subconscious apprehension of the likeness between herself and her eldest son, who had undergone no such con-

QUEEN VICTORIA

version, which made her hard and unsympathetic? The Prince of Wales was pure Hanoverian : what else had she been before ' all changed ' ?

It is characteristic of the Queen's tenacity that the first indication that her brain was recovering from shock was a complaint that a despatch had been sent off without reference to her. An experiment in sovereignty had been terminated by the Prince Consort's death very much as another and earlier experiment had been terminated by her marriage. The ranging, tentative, speculative side of his intellect had always been closed to her : she could share his conclusions but not the process by which he arrived at them. Now she could only fall back on those clear rules for her behaviour which they had formulated together : she must be above party : everything must be explained to her before she gave her sanction ; she must enforce the solidarity of the Cabinet by referring back the decision of a single Minister with which she did not concur, and the Cabinet must be in no doubt about her own views. These became the canons of her constitutional practice.

The political situation was more trying than ever with Palmerston at Downing Street and

QUEEN VICTORIA

Lord John at the Foreign Office : in 1850 Lord John had kept Palmerston in order : in 1859 Palmerston had rapped Lord John over the knuckles : now the ' two dreadful old men ' —to use the distracted Queen's own words—were ramping side by side in a direction where neither the Queen nor the bulk of their colleagues wished to follow. The Crown Princess of Prussia wrote their policy down as ' hysterical fussiness.' None of the parties concerned had the new map of Europe clear in mind, and the Prince Consort was no longer there to explain it. In 1863 Lord Granville advised the Queen that ' the conduct of the Prussian Government is suicidal,' and the Queen agreed : ' Prussia has made such a mess : she is really doing all to ruin herself.' Their minds were preoccupied by the spectacle of Austria as the great Germanic power, and France moving toward the Rhine. The first step in the great European revolution, which in ten years forced Austria out of the Germanic body altogether and laid the French Empire at the feet of Prussia, was, in truth, taken in December 1863, when Prussia and Austria together occupied Holstein, and for those who had eyes to see, it was plain that a new era had opened, and that hysterical fussiness could

QUEEN VICTORIA

only end in humiliation. Palmerston had committed himself to the opinion that, 'if any violent attempt were made to overthrow the rights and to interfere with the independence of Denmark, she would not find herself alone.' But Denmark did find herself alone: the Queen and more than half the Cabinet were against intervention, and in any case Palmerston's threat was an empty one: we had not sufficient troops to take the field for her protection. The Queen was accused of Prussian sympathies: her German relatives had naturally encouraged the idea, and some of her courtiers were confessedly pro-German. She stigmatized Lord Ellenborough, who had made himself the mouthpiece of these suspicions, as malignant and unmanly, and she hoped that 'every one *will* know *how* she resents Lord Ellenborough's conduct and how she despises him!' According to Mr. Gladstone, who was also strongly opposed to war, she had held the balance well. She was sustained, not only by her certainty that she was acting as the Prince Consort would have wished, but by the support of her secretary, General Grey, who had been in the Prince's confidence, and by that of Lord Granville, described by the Prince as 'the only working man' on the committee of the Great

QUEEN VICTORIA

Exhibition, who continued to furnish unofficial accounts of what had happened in Cabinet. Once she intervened with decisive effect. On June 12, 1864, Lord Russell informed her that the Cabinet had decided that, if the Danes accepted the English frontier proposals and the Germans rejected them, 'a material aid should be afforded by Great Britain to Denmark.' The Queen replied—and it is a good example of the use of the suspensory voice in Cabinet deliberations—by indicating the points on which she desired further assurance before giving her consent. She heard afterwards from Lord Granville that, in fact, the Cabinet had not decided anything of the kind, and, when the Queen's letter was read, they unanimously told the Foreign Secretary that he had acted without authority.

The death of Palmerston in 1865, which released the long-pent-up flood of Liberalism, gave Lord Russell his opportunity of figuring as the hero of a second Reform Bill. As Prince Albert had always been in favour of an extension of the franchise, the Queen was ready to approve, provided there was no agitation, and, when Russell's Government was defeated, she refused at first to accept their resignations. They had resigned on a point of detail—rate-

QUEEN VICTORIA

able value as against annual rent—which in the course of debate had swollen into a question of principle. Insisting that it was only a detail and that the state of Europe did not make a change of Government expedient, the Queen held her Ministers to their posts, but they knew that as a Government they were exhausted. After a week of discussion they left the decision to her. The audience which ensued was recorded both by the Queen herself and by Mr. Gladstone, and the clearness and accuracy of her account is striking : the trustworthiness of her memory was always one of her most useful gifts. She asked for a few hours for reflection : Lord Russell replied that this was impossible. She then asked whether the Cabinet could not settle the question themselves. He declined : she then gave her decision : if the Cabinet was agreed that a compromise was possible they should carry on ; if it was hopeless and the Cabinet was divided, they must go. They went : and the Queen sent for Lord Derby.

The immediate result of Lord Derby's taking over the Government was the Hyde Park Riots, the first riots which had taken place in London for many years. No great harm was done. Disraeli wrote to the Queen : ' All goes well.

QUEEN VICTORIA

The Home Secretary's pathos seems to have melted the multitude.' It was comforting to find that Mr. Disraeli, in honourable contrast to the pedantic and obstructive Mr. Gladstone at the Treasury, could easily persuade Parliament 'to vote the gun-metal for her dear, great husband's memorial.' But the Reform agitation, which the Queen deprecated, was growing rapidly, and, early in October, she told Lord Derby that she wanted to have the question settled. She offered her services as negotiator with the Opposition. The offer was declined, but gradually the Cabinet came round to the Queen's view that a settlement must be arrived at. Throughout this critical period her mind was working with recovered clarity. The situation on the Continent was ominous. Austria had been knocked out by Prussia : France had made and withdrawn a demand for compensation on the Rhine : the neutrality of Belgium was endangered. The Queen saw in this conjuncture an opportunity for recovering the prestige which 'hysterical fussiness,' or, as she called it, 'bluster and bully,' had lost, but, to do this, unity at home, based on mutual concession, was essential. By the end of the year Derby was converted, and as soon as Disraeli was also convinced, he threw all his

QUEEN VICTORIA

skill of Parliamentary management into carrying the bill. The Queen's connection with the Reform of 1867 was closer and more honourable than her uncle's connection with the Reform of 1831, and the poet who denounced 'the false English Nobles and their Jew' could scarcely have known who stood behind them.

Intellectually the Queen appears at her best in these two years. Her nervous horror of State appearances persisted, and it was with the greatest difficulty that Lord Russell in 1866, and again Lord Derby in the following year, had persuaded her to open Parliament. 'The royal robes were laid on the chair but the Queen did not wear them. She stood sad and motionless by the Throne while the Lord Chancellor read the speech.' But she was supported by the sense of her own usefulness : the broken heart and shattered nerves subside from paragraphs to sentences, and finally to parentheses. She had begun to take, and to feel, her standing as the Elder Statesman, and Disraeli was the first of her Ministers to divine it. In February 1868, when Derby finally succumbed to gout, his appointment as Prime Minister was hardly less gratifying to his sovereign than to himself.

QUEEN VICTORIA

It will be his delight and duty, to render the transaction of affairs as easy to your Majesty, as possible ; and in smaller matters he hopes he may succeed in this ; but he ventures to trust, that, in the great affairs of state, your Majesty will deign not to withhold from him the benefit of your Majesty's guidance.

Your Majesty's life has been passed in constant communion with great men, and the knowledge and management of important transactions. Even if your Majesty were not gifted with those great abilities, which all now acknowledge, this rare and choice experience must give your Majesty an advantage in judgment, which few living persons, and probably no living Prince, can rival.

It is a tribute to Bagehot's penetration that he was able to state with such precision the exact point which the evolution of the monarchy had reached in the sixties.

The sovereign has, under a constitutional monarchy such as ours, three rights—the right to be consulted, the right to encourage, the right to warn. In the course of a long reign a sagacious king would acquire an experience with which few ministers could contend. The king could say : ' Have you referred to the transactions which happened during such and such an administration, I think about fourteen years ago ? They afford an instructive example of the bad results which are sure to attend the policy which you propose.' A pompous man easily sweeps away the suggestions

QUEEN VICTORIA

of those beneath him. But though a minister may so deal with his subordinate, he cannot so deal with his king. He has no longer to regard the deferential hints of an acknowledged inferior, but to answer the arguments of a superior to whom he has himself to be respectful. It would be childish to suppose that a conference between a minister and his sovereign can ever be a conference of pure argument. In a nearly balanced argument the king must always have the better, and in politics many most important arguments are nearly balanced. Whenever there was much to be said for the king's opinion it would have its full weight ; whatever was said for the minister's opinion would only have a lessened and enfeebled weight.

The Crown and the Cabinet had settled down into a state of mutual adjustment.

CHAPTER VIII

In that Faery Queen I mean glory in my general intention, but in my particular I conceive the most excellent and glorious person of Our Sovereign the Queen and her kingdom in Faeryland.

SPENSER.

‘HE¹ is more than six feet four inches in stature, but does not look so tall from his proportionate breadth ; like St. Peter’s, no one is at first aware of his dimensions. But he has the sagacity of the elephant, as well as the form ’ : so the new Prime Minister commended the new Chancellor of the Exchequer. Of the American Minister he writes : ‘ In manner, size, and colour, he somewhat resembles Lord Lansdowne, and would be very good-looking, had he not lost an eye in a duel ! But, it is believed, he was only a second, and a peace-maker, which makes his fate more distressing.’ No wonder the Queen found Mr. Disraeli ‘ extremely agreeable and original.’ He showed more consideration for her comfort, too, than any of them since good Peel and

¹ Ward Hunt.

QUEEN VICTORIA

dear Lord Aberdeen : flowers from Osborne and Windsor expressed her gratification. It was a romantic comedy with the heroine more conscious of the romance, the hero of the comedy. Yet the ironic sentimentalist so played his part and set the stage that his Faery Queen was at her best : he found her in truth interesting, amusing and intelligent, in part a revival of Melbourne's young Victoria, and in part his own creation. She was a grandmother, and ready to enjoy this new interest with less weight of responsibility than she had felt for the little objects of Prince Albert's conscientious concern, but she was only entering on the fifties, and, despite her 'fixed fancies,' full of vitality. Her interest in her fellow-creatures was no longer confined to those whose sorrows reflected her own. Lord Melbourne used to entertain her with gossip about his dinners at Holland House : now Lady Augusta Stanley arranged tea-parties for her at the Deanery with guests no less odd and interesting :

Mr. Carlyle, the historian, a strange-looking eccentric old Scotchman, who holds forth, in a drawling melancholy voice, with a broad Scotch accent, upon Scotland and upon the utter degeneration of everything ; Mr. and Mrs. Grote, old

QUEEN VICTORIA

acquaintances of mine from Kensington, unaltered, she very peculiar, clever and masculine, he also an historian, of the old school ; Sir C. and Lady Lyell, he an old acquaintance, most agreeable, and she very pleasing ; Mr. Browning, the poet, a very agreeable man. It was, at first, very shy work speaking to them, when they were all drawn up ; but afterwards, when tea was being drunk, Augusta got them to come and sit near me, and they were very agreeable and talked very entertainingly.

And on another occasion :

Lady Eastlake, tall, large, rather ponderous and pompous ; Mr. Froude, with fine eyes, but nothing very sympathetic ; Professor Owen, charming as ever ; Professor Tyndall (not very attractive), who has a great deal to say ; Sir Henry Holland, quite wonderful and unaltered ; and Mr. Leikie (? Lecky), young, pleasing, but very shy.

This was the closest contact which the Queen established with the intellectual life of her time. It was, perhaps, fortunate for the peace of the tea-party that she did not detect in Mrs. Grote a partisan of ‘ this mad, wicked folly of “ Women’s Rights ” with all its attendant horrors on which her poor feeble sex is bent, forgetting every sense of womanly feeling and propriety ’ ; or in Grote an abettor of Miss Elizabeth Garrett, not a good woman in her sense of the word. ‘ God created men and

QUEEN VICTORIA

women different—then let them remain each in their own position.’ Women’s professional aspirations generally, and those toward medicine in particular, she regarded as ‘mad and demoralizing.’ She wrote to Mr. Gladstone that ‘she is *most* anxious that it sh^{ld} be known how she not only disapproves but *abhors* the attempts to destroy all propriety and womanly feeling w^h will inevitably be the result of what has been proposed. The Queen is a woman herself—and knows what an anomaly her *own* position is—but that can be reconciled with reason and propriety tho’ it is a terribly difficult and trying one. But to tear away all the barriers w^h surround a woman, and to propose that they sh^{ld} study with *men*—things w^h c^{ld} not be named before then—certainly not—in *a mixed* audience—w^{ld} be to introduce a total disregard of what must be considered as belonging to the rules and principles of morality.

‘Let woman be what God intended ; a helpmate for man—but with totally different duties and vocations.’

Disraeli, after holding office for less than a year, was defeated at the polls, and the Queen at once sent for Mr. Gladstone. ‘My mission is to pacify Ireland,’ remarked the Prime

QUEEN VICTORIA

Minister elect, who was felling a tree. The audience was friendly and satisfactory. The Queen did not like his bill for the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Irish Church, but she accepted it as inevitable, and played a constitutional part in helping to prevent the threatened clash with the Lords. The trouble was that Mr. Gladstone's lengthy explanations left her in a fog. He 'thinks he shall best fulfil his duty by consulting the Cabinet upon the several alternatives named in No. 30 of the paper No. II.' Possibly, but it was all very bewildering. It is, perhaps, curious that she let the Irish Church go so easily, but it may be explained by her lack of interest in Ireland, and by her distaste for the Church of England. The Church of Scotland was for her the true Protestant Church, and the interests of that Church she jealously guarded. Her frequent battles with her Prime Ministers over Church appointments in England bring out her hatred of High Churchmen and Evangelicals alike. She never understood that the Church of England was expressly designed not only to hold staunch Protestants, but to retain those who might otherwise leave her for the Church of Rome. If the Queen had had her way it would have lost this character, and become merely a Broad

QUEEN VICTORIA

Church sect. Her own faith was simple : she was free from religiosity, and had, as Melbourne said, no ' Sunday face.' At the time of the Papal aggression she had been indignant at the animosity of Protestants against Roman Catholics : everybody should be allowed to worship in their own way except the Puseyites and the Prince of Wales, who was reprimanded while at Oxford for too frequent attendance at the Holy Communion : twice a year was enough for his father and herself, and it should be enough for him.

The Queen's indifference to Ireland had been a matter of concern to successive Prime Ministers. Melbourne had suggested a visit before her marriage : her early popularity there, fanned by ballad-mongers and organized by O'Connell, had been allowed to run to waste.¹ She and the Prince Consort only paid three short visits. During Disraeli's administration the Prince of Wales was invited without the Queen's previous consent, and, says Disraeli, ' the occasion chosen for eliciting the

¹ Ernest of Hanover's recent and scandalous connection with the Orange Lodges no doubt quickened the enthusiasm of the Catholic population for his niece. When Oxford fired at the Queen a wild suspicion passed through Macaulay's mind that the Orange party were at the bottom of it, and the still wilder rumour that the Queen was a crypto-Catholic may perhaps derive from the same source.

QUEEN VICTORIA

loyal feeling of Ireland was a princely visit to some races at a place with the unfortunate name of Punchestown, or something like it.' Racing, as the Prince complained, was the subject of an annual 'jobation' from his mother, and his inauguration as a Knight of St. Patrick was tactfully substituted for Punchestown as the ostensible object of the visit. Disraeli and Gladstone both pressed a Royal Residence, to be occupied for a short time each year, as conducive to Irish loyalty, but the Queen would not hear of it: the climate was bad, it would be expensive, she must keep the Prince near her.¹ It is remarkable that Disraeli never visited that 'damnable, delightful country,' and Mr. Gladstone only spent three weeks there in 1877, seeing little or nothing of the Ireland of the Irish.

The objection to the national expense of 'une nombreuse famille,' which the Queen herself had raised and forgotten, was brought to the front in connection with Princess Louise's dowry, when she became engaged to the Marquis of Lorne. This and the Queen's infrequent public appearances led to repub-

¹ *The Queen and Mr. Gladstone*, by Philip Guedalla, contains important memoranda by Mr. Gladstone on the proposal that the Prince of Wales should reside in Ireland, including a suggestion for the eventual abolition of the Lord-Lieutenancy.

QUEEN VICTORIA

lican talk about the burden of monarchy. Her horror of public appearances, like the Osborne-Balmoral programme, had become a fixed idea, and to argue with a fixed idea only exasperates the sufferer. The anticipation was more dreadful than the event, and the opening of Blackfriars Bridge and Holborn Viaduct, to which she was brought after a terrific struggle with the Prime Minister, was really an enjoyable experience, with 'a hard trial for me *all alone* with my children in an open carriage amongst such thousands!' as a mere afterthought. Her children and her secretary were sure that such efforts would not injure her health, but her physician, Sir William Jenner, nursed her fancies: she felt herself 'teased and tormented' if she were asked to prolong her stay in London by twenty-four hours, and the chief tormentor was her Prime Minister. Mr. Gladstone was seriously alarmed at the growth of republican feeling, but his acknowledged loyalty to the Crown could not make up for his heartless treatment of a suffering woman. In a word, they got on one another's nerves as man and woman before their political dissensions had become apparent. The serious illness of the Prince of Wales at the end of 1871 elicited an outburst of sympathy which reassured the

QUEEN VICTORIA

Queen—‘The feeling shown by the whole nation is quite marvellous and most touching and striking, showing how really sound and truly loyal the people really are’—and Sir Charles Dilke’s motion for an enquiry into the Civil List was lost by an enormous majority.

In March 1873 the Government was unexpectedly defeated on an Irish University Bill. Mr. Gladstone resigned, and the Queen sent for Mr. Disraeli. Then followed a brilliant fencing match between the two rivals. Gladstone’s object was to force Disraeli into office, expose him for several months to all the humiliations of a minority Government, and so check the visible growth of Conservative feeling in the country. Disraeli was determined to keep Gladstone in office until his popularity, already worn down by his domestic legislation, was completely exhausted. The negotiations were conducted in solemn memoranda transmitted through the Queen. Whether she quite followed the moves may be doubted: her demeanour was admirable in its correctness and impartiality, though neither of the combatants could have doubted which side had her heart.

At the election in 1874 the Conservatives had

QUEEN VICTORIA

a majority of 100, and Mr. Disraeli kissed hands with the words, 'I plight my troth to the kindest of *Mistresses*.' Mr. Gladstone's farewell audience was cordial, and Lord Granville assured her that he was 'under the charm,' but the nervous resentment engendered a few years before was changing into political animosity. His behaviour over the Public Worship Regulation Bill, dealing with the shameful practices of the Ritualists, was unwise and un-Protestant, while Mr. Disraeli's triumphant management was received with rapture at Osborne.

I can only describe my reception by telling you that I really thought she was going to embrace me. She was wreathed with smiles, and as she tattled, glided about the room like a bird. She told me it was 'all owing to my courage and tact,' and then she said, 'To think of your having the gout all the time! How you must have suffered! And you ought not to stand now. You shall have a chair!' 'Only think of that! I remember that *feu* Lord Derby, after one of his severest illnesses, had an audience of Her Majesty, and he mentioned it to me, as a proof of the Queen's favor, that Her Majesty had remarked to him 'how sorry she was she c^d not ask him to be seated.' The etiquette was so severe.

Disraeli not only made the Queen feel useful : he made her feel great. At fifty-five she really

QUEEN VICTORIA

became the Faery Queen. She and her people awoke together to the consciousness of an imperial mission : she became an imperialist. On the social legislation of Disraeli's Government, its lasting title to fame, the Prince Consort's memoranda in assorted piles would have reached his study ceiling, but his spirit failed to inspire the Queen. She hoped, indeed, with Mr. Dickens, a favourite novelist, that the classes might draw nearer to one another in time, and she was sure that the opening of museums on Sunday would reduce drunkenness ; of interest in the details of factory and trade union legislation there is little or no sign. But over the new picture of her many-coloured Empire she glowed and thrilled. The children at home, especially that Irish family, had often been very trying : now she began to feel herself the beneficent grandmother of distant nations. She received Maori chiefs and promised that their lands should not be taken from them, and Burmese envoys, who must bow their heads to the ground before the Empress of India. Lacrosse played by people who seemed to come straight out of *Hiawatha* had a charm which she never found in cricket or football. She pitied Bishop Selwyn, when he exchanged New Zealand for Lichfield and the Black Country,

QUEEN VICTORIA

‘ where there will be no romance, no primitive races, but the worst kind of uncivilised civilisation.’ When Bishop Colenso returned from Natal, she was undisturbed by his heresies, and expressed ‘ her sense of his noble, disinterested conduct in favour of the natives who were so unjustly used, and in general her very strong feeling (and she has few stronger) that the natives and coloured races should be treated with every kindness and affection, as brothers, not—as, alas ! Englishmen too often do—as totally different beings to ourselves, fit only to be crushed and shot down ! ’ And she was anxious that her views on this subject should be known far and wide.

In 1874 Mr. Gladstone, not for the first time, had more or less withdrawn from politics with the intention of devoting his remaining years to higher things. But a packet of notes on ‘ Future Retribution ’ is docketed, ‘ *From this I was called away to write on Bulgaria.* ’ He had smelt blood. For Gladstone’s wrongheadedness over Church matters the Queen was prepared : it was during the long struggle over the Eastern question that he finally lost her confidence. If Disraeli made too light of the Bulgarian atrocities she, in her hatred of Russia, went further : she thought ‘ the Attor-

QUEEN VICTORIA

ney-General ought to be set at ' the agitators of St. James's Hall : ' it can't be constitutional.' Though hardly a case for the Attorney-General, it was certainly a marked departure from the conventions of the Constitution. Never before had a great public agitation been led by a man who had been Prime Minister, and might be Prime Minister again. Mr. Gladstone was trying to combine the rôles of Queen's ex-Minister and people's tribune, and the Queen naturally watched his progress with concern. She was shocked by the Bulgarian atrocities, but, as the rebellion which made the Turks atrocious had been instigated by Russia, she soon convinced herself that Russia was really to blame : ' This mawkish sentimentality for people who hardly deserve the name of real Christians, as if they were more God's creatures and our fellow-creatures than every other nation abroad, and forgetting the great interests of this great country is really incomprehensible.' The atrocities were soon merged in a great imperial issue, the advance of Russia towards the Mediterranean, the remapping of Eastern Europe, the threat to Constantinople and, in the background, to India. From an Imperialist she became a Jingo, and from her seclusion—never more inconvenient to her exhausted

QUEEN VICTORIA

Ministers—at Balmoral or Osborne she plied the Prime Minister with daily letters and hourly telegrams such as every patriotic old lady was longing to write : Be firm, be bold ; the country is with you ; above all do not be too late. ‘ If England is to kiss Russia’s feet, the Queen will not be a party to the humiliation of England and would lay down her crown ’ : the Prime Minister can tell the Cabinet so if he likes. She was, in fact, thirsting for war : ‘ Oh, if the Queen were a man, she would like to go and give those Russians a good beating ! We shall never be friends again till we have it out. This the Queen feels sure of.’ In the Cabinet there was division : Lord Derby resigned, and Lord Salisbury, now at one with the Prime Minister, took ‘ the labouring oar.’

It was an exciting time with the fleet at Besika Bay, Indian troops at Malta, Cyprus annexed, and the triumphant return of Lord Beaconsfield from the Berlin Congress. ‘ It is all due to your energy and firmness,’ telegraphed the Queen. Her Prime Minister had said more than once that he hoped to make her Dictatress of Europe : had the hour indeed struck ? But the sensation had to be paid for, and it was unfortunate for the Government

QUEEN VICTORIA

that their expensive preparations for a war in Europe coincided with a period of acute agricultural depression, and were followed by actual wars in Afghanistan and Zululand. The electors of Midlothian opined that the country would soon be in the poorhouse, Lancashire thought it safest to go with Lord Derby, the Midlands were learning to take their opinions from Birmingham, and Birmingham was not yet imperialist. At the election in the spring of 1880 the Conservatives were put to utter rout, and, after a forlorn attempt with Lord Hartington and Lord Granville, the Queen had to send for Mr. Gladstone.

CHAPTER IX

Exceptus brevi osculo et nullo sermone.

TACITUS.

LORD HARTINGTON had bluntly advised the Queen not to begin by telling Mr. Gladstone that she had no confidence whatever in him. From the new Prime Minister's own account of his first audience it is clear that she bore those words in mind. He describes her as 'natural under effort.' She had not yet forgotten the Prince Consort's dictum that, as Queen, she could have no personal feelings. She began by saying frankly that there had been some little things during his period of opposition which had caused her pain. Mr. Gladstone, with equal frankness, admitted that his language had not been altogether such as he would have used had he been leader of the Opposition, or a candidate for office, and she replied 'with some good-natured archness, "But you will have to bear the consequences."' The first consequence was a State Paper, surely unique of its kind, conveying the new Prime

QUEEN VICTORIA

Minister's apologies to the Austrian Ambassador for language used 'in a position of greater freedom and less responsibility,' price 2d. In 1874 the Queen had given a warning to one of her favourite junior Ministers, Mr. W. E. Forster : ' She most earnestly hopes, that, when out of office, he will remember *one thing* which she thinks is so often forgotten, viz. to be very cautious *not to pledge himself strongly* to any particular cause, and to any particular measures, for they invariably hamper a statesman who takes office and often lead to very *serious* difficulties.' And the misfortunes of the new administration were proof of the Queen's good sense.

The Queen of Mr. Gladstone's second term of office had entered on a new phase, at once a return to and a development from the girlhood of Melbourne's administration. Beaconsfield, like Melbourne, had made things very easy for her. He had kept her mind on affairs, such as Russia, India and the Empire, in which she was really interested : he had trusted her completely, and had genuinely found her an intelligent listener on whom to test the value of his own ideas. She was again the alert, interested, passionate little partisan of Lord Melbourne's days, with a growing fund of

QUEEN VICTORIA

experience, which Beaconsfield respected, and an increased, and not altogether unjustified, confidence in her own judgment. But the Albertine Crown, of which she had kept the ghost alive during the first years of her widowhood, was fading : the well-managed department with its canons of procedure and propriety was dissolved by the warmth of her sympathy with Beaconsfield. If he made things easy for the Queen he also made them easy for himself : some said too easy. Bagehot had remarked that Parliament had never had a Committee on the Queen, and on May 13, 1879, some members of the Opposition endeavoured to make good the omission. Mr. Dillwyn moved and Mr. Leonard Courtney seconded

That to prevent the growing abuse by Her Majesty's Ministers of the prerogative and influence of the Crown, and consequent augmentation of the power of the Government in enabling them, under cover of the supposed personal interposition of the Sovereign, to withdraw from the cognizance and control of this House matters relating to policy and expenditure properly within the scope of its powers and privileges, it is necessary that the mode and limits of the action of the prerogative should be more strictly observed.

It will be seen from the terms of the motion

QUEEN VICTORIA

that the movers were trying to kill three birds with one stone. Their gestures were so respectful, however, that all three got away. The attempt to define the indefinable involved a confusion of three points, namely, the growth of the Cabinet as an executive at the expense of the House of Commons as a deliberative organ, the aggrandizement of the Prime Minister at the expense of the Cabinet, and the elusive and incalculable influence of the Queen herself. Touching the last point, it is very significant that the only cases of personal intervention which the Opposition could cite related to the Empire beyond the seas. She had corresponded with the Viceroy in India and with Sir Bartle Frere in South Africa. Here they were on safe ground. As long ago as 1843 Peel had warned the Queen against direct correspondence with Lord Ellenborough in India. She always had a generous belief in the man on the spot, whether Viceroy, soldier, or bishop, and she felt that they responded, and that through them she reached her remoter subjects. In the evolution of the later Victorian monarchy this almost mystical relation between the Empire and the unseen but ever-present Queen was an important element. On one African tribe at least her personality was so

QUEEN VICTORIA

sacredly impressed that a new governor was greeted by his Christian charges with a loyal shout of 'Hullo, Gubner, how am Queen Victoria, how am 'Postle Paul?' Now, in 1880, the imperialist Queen found herself confronted with a Government elected on an anti-imperialist ticket, a Government, moreover, which contained to her unconcealed disgust two Radicals, Chamberlain and Dilke, whose conversion from republican opinions was at any rate very recent. The banked-up forces of democracy were gathering for a flood ; the land, the Lords, the Church, the Union all seemed in danger, and the Queen roundly asserted that '*A Democratic Monarchy* she will not *consent to belong to*. Others must be found if that is to be, and she *thinks* we are on a dangerous and doubtful slope which may become too rapid for us to stop, when it is too late.' As always, she saw herself as the guardian of the Constitution, and, if she called the new monster Democracy, it must have appeared in her dreams with the projecting collar, smouldering eyes, and platform voice of Mr. Gladstone.

The Queen felt, in fact, that Mr. Gladstone's return to office at this juncture was, as Melbourne would have said, a smack at the Crown.

QUEEN VICTORIA

The situation of 1841 was curiously reproduced: the old Tory Imperialist clung to Beaconsfield as the young Whig had clung to Melbourne. Gladstone takes Peel's place in the analogy, but no Prince Albert stood between him and the Queen to condense and interpret his difficult and voluminous memoranda, to dispute and possibly to modify his unwelcome conclusions. Within the year she had lost Beaconsfield, and mourned him with bitter tears and a faint reflection of his own style: 'At this very moment he is being laid to rest in his own loved home, and the respect and true love and sorrow of the nation at large will be far more in unison with his feelings than the gloomy pomp of a so-called public funeral and the dismal dreariness of a grave in the great Metropolitan Abbey.' Lord Granville, whom at first she attempted to use as a go-between, was soon rejected as 'weak as water.' Gladstone, in his own eyes and in the eyes of the majority of the electorate, stood for Principles against the non-moral system of Disraeli, and it was unfortunate that the advent of morality to power had to be celebrated by the bombardment of Alexandria and the resignation of morality's prime representative, John Bright. The irony was lost on the Queen, who

QUEEN VICTORIA

was all for hanging Arabi Pasha. But she was quick to see that principles conceived for the platform could not be made by good intentions to fit situations created by events. And the results—the tame acceptance of the trifling reverse at Majuba as a final decision, the Phoenix Park murders, which, if not the consequence, were the sequel of Parnell's release from prison, above all the death of Gordon—could not be excused by the conscientious unwillingness of her Government to govern.

Gordon's character and heroism made the strongest possible appeal to the Queen's imagination, as indeed to that of her people. Her emotional reception of the news resulted in an actual illness : she felt that his life had been sacrificed to ministerial callousness and ineptitude by which both herself and England were disgraced. Her telegrams *en'clair* to three of her Ministers containing the words ' to think that all this might have been prevented and many precious lives saved by earlier action is too frightful ' were bitterly resented by Gladstone. Neither his cold and lengthy repudiation of responsibility nor her excuse for the marked departure from her usual custom, that she had not expected the telegram to be

QUEEN VICTORIA

published, served to close the rift between them. Some years later Mr. Gladstone told Lord Morley that on reading her letter of condolence to Miss Gordon his first impulse had been never to set foot in Windsor Castle again.

Friction between the Queen and her Government was not confined to relations with the Prime Minister. Lord Hartington had objected to her congratulatory telegram sent direct to Lord Wolseley after the battle of Abu Klea, and Sir Henry Ponsonby was directed to deal with him.

The Queen always *has* telegraphed direct to her Generals, and *always will* do so, as they value *that* and *don't* care near so much for a mere official message. But she generally sent an official one too, and somehow or other she forgot or omitted sending it to Lord Hartington. But she thinks Lord Hartington's letter *very officious* and *impertinent in tone*. The Queen *has* the right to telegraph congratulations and enquiries to *any* one, and won't stand dictation. She *won't* be a *machine*. But the Liberals always wish to make her *feel THAT*, and she *won't accept it*.

The Queen must think Sir Henry *must* feel this and trusts he will *make* Lord H. understand his impropriety.

Sir Henry's smooth interpretation of this

QUEEN VICTORIA

fierce note is a good sample of his secretarial tact :

I am commanded by the Queen to observe that her Majesty has always been in the habit of telegraphing in her own name to the General commanding a force which has achieved a victory. But she regrets that in the case of Abu Klea she omitted to telegraph the message simultaneously to you.

The five years during which the Liberal administration lasted were years of misery to the Queen. Although the menace to the Union was not yet more than a phantom, she felt that the Constitution itself was in danger. It was her constant complaint that Gladstone put the House of Commons in the forefront, degrading the other elements, the Lords and the Crown. Once indeed she was able to feel that she had been of use : it was fully admitted that her personal influence alone had released the deadlock over the Franchise Bill. But in her negotiations with the Duke of Argyll for the formation of a third party in the House of Lords to keep the Prime Minister in check we are aware of a certain reversion from the canons of constitutional propriety drafted by her husband to the more red-blooded methods practised by her grandfather.

QUEEN VICTORIA

On June 8, 1885, the Government was unexpectedly defeated over a proposal to increase the beer and spirit duties, and the Queen summoned Lord Salisbury to Balmoral. The new Government would be in a minority, and a dissolution was impossible till the Reform measures were completed. Lord Salisbury was, therefore, unwilling to form an administration without a pledge of support on finance from his predecessor. Mr. Gladstone insisted that negotiations should be carried on through the Queen, and Lord Salisbury had to be content with vague assurances for which she made herself responsible. The result of the autumn elections was a Liberal majority over the Conservatives, but the eighty-six Home Rulers held the key of the situation, and the Government did not at once resign. There was no doubt that Mr. Gladstone wished to resume office, and no doubt that he had some dire intention with regard to Ireland, though its exact nature had not been disclosed. The Queen was profoundly disturbed. She embarked on a series of distracted letters to Mr. Goschen, urging him to convince Lord Hartington 'of what is at last *his duty* and of what he owes to his Queen and country, which really goes before allegiance to Mr. Gladstone,

QUEEN VICTORIA

who can persuade himself that *everything* he takes up is right, even though it be calling black, white, and wrong, right.' (John Bright, be it observed, had already remarked that Mr. Gladstone was not unscrupulous, but had a flexible conscience, which followed the bent of his mind. It was not the Queen's way to make such fine psychological distinctions : experience had made her a good judge of character, but her judgments were severely practical.) She told Mr. Goschen that if only Lord Hartington and the other Liberals would speak out, a coalition might be formed which would save the Government from falling into the reckless hands of Mr. Gladstone : ' We want *all moderate men*, all true patriots to support the Throne and Empire *irrespective of party*.'

The Queen opened Parliament in person on January 21, 1886, and five days later the Government, in spite of some support from the Opposition, were defeated on an amendment to the Address about agricultural allotments. Neither Lord Salisbury nor the Liberal dissentients felt that the time was ripe for a coalition, and the Queen sent Sir Henry Ponsonby to ask whether Mr. Gladstone could form an administration. She still cherished a

QUEEN VICTORIA

hope that he might refuse, and instructed Sir Henry to say that she 'had understood, from his repeated expressions of a desire to retire from public life, that he would not accept office, and therefore in sending this message she left him free to accept or not.' But Mr. Gladstone, impressed by the gravity of the situation, felt it his duty to accept, and even consented to replace Lord Granville at the Foreign Office by Lord Rosebery, her own nominee. Sir Henry Ponsonby, at the instigation of the Prince of Wales, tried to induce the Queen to come up to Windsor, as her absence during this critical time was provoking criticism, but she was obdurate, and the new Ministers were sworn in at Osborne. 'The Queen,' says Lord Morley, 'wore a moody, and if I must confess, not attractive look.' The perfection of her great manner was impaired : Mr. Gladstone himself notes that at subsequent drawing-rooms he 'observed the variations of H.M.'s *accueils*.' With her new Foreign Secretary, who was prepared to continue Lord Salisbury's foreign policy, she at once established friendly and confidential relations. She advised him not to bring too many matters before the Cabinet, but to discuss everything with herself and Mr. Gladstone. It is significant that she

QUEEN VICTORIA

offered to give Lord Rosebery intelligence from her private letters. In earlier years she had been in the habit of frankly sharing her correspondence with her Ministers, but it may be surmised that Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville had been deprived of this assistance. Here is a curious reversal of constitutional canons. Formerly it had been the Queen who insisted on Cabinet solidarity ; now it was the Prime Minister, and the Queen tried in vain to discover what was going on behind those closed doors. ‘He is so reserved,’ she complains, ‘and writes such unsatisfying letters, that the Queen never knows where she is. She does not know *who* takes his or other views (which all his predecessors kept her informed of) and she is left powerless to *judge* of the state of affairs !’ Mr. Gladstone was, no doubt, well aware that to tell his sovereign who took his or other views might be highly inconvenient, and he had already declared if Beaconsfield did so he was ‘guilty of great baseness and perfidy.’ Both parties suffered. The Prime Minister lost the benefit and the Queen the advantage of her position as Elder Statesman. Her letters contain the frequent wail that her advice is always disregarded and always proves right. The relations between them during these five

QUEEN VICTORIA

years undoubtedly went far to affirm the conception, which she and the Prince Consort had repudiated, of the governing Cabinet and the Mandarin Sovereign.

The Prime Minister's nefarious designs on Ireland, though still nebulous, had an immediate effect on the Household. Seven lords refused appointments: '*I know*,' wrote the Queen, 'it is NOT meant out of *want of respect for me*, but of a *sense of patriotism* which *ought always to be above party*. Still it is atrocious of Mr. Gladstone, or Lord Granville even more, to expose *me* to having only half a Household.' The Duchesses followed suit, and Lord Granville had the temerity to suggest a Marchioness: 'this has never been done in my time or in Queen Adelaide's.'

The grounds for the Queen's antagonism to Mr. Gladstone were twofold. She felt his foreign policy, in contrast with that of Lord Beaconsfield, as a personal no less than a national humiliation, and his attitude towards politics in general, in contrast with that of all her former Prime Ministers, that of a wrecker of sacred institutions which it was her mission to guard. For the first time she was on principle as well as emotionally in opposition to her Cabinet. She was even prepared to defend

QUEEN VICTORIA

Lord Randolph Churchill's slogan 'Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right' on the ground that the Union was law. Here many of her subjects felt with her. John Bright did not scruple to speak of the Irish party in the House of Commons as the Rebel party. In her determination to counter and defeat the danger to the Union she almost put herself at the head of the Opposition. She prepared herself for Mr. Gladstone's first audience by a long consultation with Lord Salisbury on posts and persons. They agreed that in Lord Rosebery's hands the honour of the country would be safe, and she was always proud that she had insisted on his appointment. Next to Lord Salisbury her mainstay was the independent Liberal, Goschen. When at last Mr. Gladstone disclosed his plan she sent through Goschen her personal thanks to Lord Hartington, who had supported the rejection of the bill.

OSBORNE, April 11, 1886.—As this is no party question, but one which concerns the safety, honour, and welfare of her dominions, the Queen wishes to express personally to Lord Hartington, not only her admiration of his speech on Friday night, but also to thank him for it. It shows that patriotism and loyalty go, as they always should, before party.

QUEEN VICTORIA

And she trusts, with certainty now, that these dangerous and ill-judged measures for unhappy Ireland will be defeated.

With the Prime Minister himself her relations continued outwardly correct, but Lord Salisbury had to warn her that her partisanship was becoming known, and that, unless she were very careful, it would be exploited by Mr. Gladstone's *entourage* :

A great deal of resentment will be excited against the Queen ; and, if tempestuous times should follow, the responsibility will be thrown on her. This is undesirable, to say the least ; especially if no object is to be gained by it. Whether it would diminish her influence seriously or not it is difficult to determine ; but the risk of such a diminution ought not to be lightly incurred. Her influence is one of the few bonds of cohesion remaining to the community.

‘ Economize your influence,’ he wrote again. ‘ Later it may be needed, for we live in very uncertain and anxious times.’ His fears were unnecessary. The Queen was approaching the fiftieth year of her reign, and the eyes of her people were fixed not on any constitutional slips and deviations but on the gracious curtsies, combining maternal love and imperial majesty, with which she answered their cheers at the

QUEEN VICTORIA

Colonial and Indian Exhibition. It was a happy Queen and Empress who heard the news of the Conservative victory at the election, and received the resignations of Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues on the 20th of July. Of his last audience Mr. Gladstone writes :

The Queen was in good spirits ; her manners altogether pleasant. She made me sit at once, asked after my wife as we began, and sent a kind message to her as we ended. About me personally, I think, her single remark was that I should require some rest. I remember that on a closing audience in 1874 she said she felt sure I might be reckoned upon to support the throne. She did not say anything of the sort to-day. Her mind and opinions have since that day been seriously warped, and I respect her for the scrupulous avoidance of anything which could have seemed to indicate a desire on her part to claim anything in common with me.

But the Queen, in her Diary, claims that she and her Liberal Prime Minister parted in complete agreement on one important question : ‘ Spoke of education, it being carried too far, and he entirely agreed that it ruined the health of the higher classes uselessly, and rendered the working classes unfitted for good servants and labourers.’

CHAPTER X

Glorying with the glories of her people,
Sorrowing with the sorrows of the lowest.

TENNYSON.

THE Queen's hopes for a strong Government of good men and true were disappointed : Lord Hartington, in spite of his satisfactory attitude toward Home Rule, was not yet prepared for coalition. Her new Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, was ready to act on the advice which she had given to Lord Rosebery at his suggestion that foreign affairs should be brought before the Cabinet as little as possible. Home Rule was quashed : she was at one with her Prime Minister on foreign policy, and he felt obliged to remind her that she must not be too obviously exultant : ' Lord Salisbury still thinks that it would be a gracious act, and tend to allay the bitterness of feeling which exists, if your Majesty were to include Mr. Gladstone in your Majesty's invitations. He is so famous a man that many people would be shocked by any neglect of him, even

QUEEN VICTORIA

where they differ from him.' Gladstone reports the result, an invitation to dine and sleep at Windsor : 'The Queen courteous as always ; somewhat embarrassed, as I thought.'

In her contentment with the political situation the Queen even ventured on a visit to that Radical stronghold, Birmingham, and was delighted with her reception. Mr. Chamberlain, staying at Windsor a few days later, tactfully complained that though Birmingham had put forth a supreme effort in decoration the Royal response was scarcely adequate : where was the Household Cavalry ? 'simplicity was suitable to a Republic, but a Sovereign should make such visits with all possible state.' The hint was not wasted : in future the Household Cavalry played its part in State visits to the provinces : Mr. Chamberlain was not such a dangerous character after all. A trip abroad nerved her to further efforts culminating in the Jubilee. Her visit to the Grande Chartreuse was particularly exhilarating. The Procureur offered her wine, 'but I asked for some of their liqueur, and by mistake he gave me some of the strongest. Got home, much satisfied with our expedition, at eight.' Lord Beaconsfield, who had been apprehensive

QUEEN VICTORIA

about the orgies of whisky at Highland burials, when one of her retainers died, would have suffered some alarm. On her return the Queen opened the People's Palace, and was delighted by a performance of Buffalo Bill. Lord Salisbury was less plagued by her health than Mr. Gladstone had been : in 1890 she danced in a quadrille at Balmoral. But even Lord Salisbury was not perfect. 'I am quite horrified,' she telegraphed, 'to see the name of that horrible lying Labouchere and of that rebel Parnell on the Committee for the Royal Grants. I protest vehemently against both. It is quite indecent to have such people on such a Committee.' He sent a soothing explanation to the effect that a ministerial majority had been secured, and violent persons were safer in a minority on the Committee than outside.

There are *no* Moderate Liberals in the present day. The old judicial type of Member, who sat rather loose to his Party and could be trusted to be fair on an occasion of this kind, has disappeared. They are all partisans, and will vote as the Radicals tell them. It is better therefore to have at once on the Committee those who are frankly Radical. Their political power is not increased, and the moral authority of the minority in the Committee is thereby diminished.

QUEEN VICTORIA

The Parnell case in 1890 was the cause of infinite satisfaction to the Queen. 'Lord Hartington,' she notes in her Diary, 'in his curious gruff way said, "I never thought anything in politics could give me as much pleasure as this does." He thought it was an immense advantage to the Government. The differences between Parnell and Mr. Gladstone could never be healed.'

The Queen's romantic feeling for her Indian Empire had been enhanced by the brilliant array of Indian Princes at her Jubilee. She now gratified her strong dramatic sense by having Indian servants to attend her, and by learning a little Hindustani that the Empress might greet any Indian potentates presented to her in their own tongue. She was much concerned by the Manipur murders in 1891, feeling strongly that the system of government was to blame, and that revenge was no cure. The English rule was 'one of fear not of love.' 'Our dealings in India should be dictated by straightforwardness, kindness, and firmness, or we cannot succeed.' She was sure that the wrong sort of Englishmen were being sent out, and that 'people of higher calibre socially, and more conciliatory as well as firm,' were needed. According to Sir William

QUEEN VICTORIA

Harcourt she had as little use for missionaries as for successful examinees : 'she said she thought they were very troublesome people, and as Empress of India pronounced a warm eulogium on the Mohammedan religion.'

The Windsor dinner-party had exulted too soon. Parnell had disappeared, but Mr. Gladstone's popularity in the country was undiminished. As the election of 1892 drew near the Queen began to dread a change of Government : 'the G.O.M. at eighty-two is a very *alarming look-out*.' Lord Salisbury fanned the flame.

Lord Salisbury sympathises deeply with your Majesty's feelings as to Mr. Gladstone. His revolutionary appeal to the jealousy of the poor will do much harm. Lord Salisbury has no doubt that, if Mr. Gladstone comes into office, his principal effort will be to escape from the results of his present reckless language. But he will not be able to do so entirely, and he is making wider and wider the dangerous antagonism between rich and poor. The worst part of the matter is that, more and more, it is evident that he has entirely outlived his judgment, though his eloquence to a great extent remains, and his passions have become more imperious.

The wraiths of former Prime Ministers, even

QUEEN VICTORIA

the 'two dreadful old men,' began to wear halocs.

As for the trouble and fatigue to the Queen, which she feels particularly unfit for, not one of these greedy place-seekers cares a straw for what their old Sovereign suffers. This is a very bitter feeling.

In former times, when there were changes of Government, though often painful to part with those one liked and esteemed, it was to have to do with gentlemen like Lord Russell, Lord Palmerston, Sir G. Grey, Sir R. Peel, Lord Aberdeen, Lord Grey, etc., etc., but now it is with utter disgust that the Queen thinks of it.

'Iniquitous' was her word for the vote of no-confidence in the Salisbury administration : the new Government was itself 'iniquitous.' Even the Court Circular, to the indignation of the Liberals, failed to preserve its usual detachment : 'Lord Salisbury tendered his resignation, which Her Majesty accepted with great regret.'

Lord Beaconsfield's fellow-author is at her best in the description of Mr. Gladstone at his first audience.

I thought him greatly altered and changed, not only much aged and walking rather bent with a stick, but altogether ; his face shrunk, deadly pale with a weird look in his eyes, a feeble expression

QUEEN VICTORIA

about the mouth, and the voice altered. I did not touch on politics, but merely discussed the arrangements for the Government.

Lord Rosebery had at first refused to join, and the Queen wisely refrained from pressing him. 'Nothing more from Lord Rosebery,' she telegraphed to Lord Salisbury. 'P. of W. wanted me to interfere, as he is so alarmed about foreign affairs, etc., but I have refused to do.' But the Prince himself, with the Queen's knowledge, entreated him to return to the Foreign Office. She had been shocked by his Edinburgh speech during the election campaign, 'which is radical to a degree to be almost communistic,' but still hoped to be able to guide his foreign policy. Like Melbourne and Beaconsfield, he knew how at once to preserve and relieve the decorum with which she had surrounded herself. His description of Wilfred Blunt is in the great tradition: 'This invaluable subject of your Majesty spends his time in masquerading like an Oriental in a circus, under a tabernacle outside Cairo, and intriguing against the British occupation of Egypt.'

Early in his administration Mr. Gladstone had an escape from a wild cow, described in hair-raising detail by Mrs. Gladstone: the

QUEEN VICTORIA

Queen's comment on the inefficiency of that cow is not vouchsafed to us. Their relations with regard to Home Rule were more tense than ever. Mr. Morley, again Irish Secretary, had given a good account of the peace and order in that country, and the Queen pointed out that 'this satisfactory state of affairs is the result of six years of firm and just government, and she can not but regret that fresh measures should be so hastily adopted which seem uncalled for, and which may encourage the lawless to fresh outbursts of crime.' A long memorandum by Mr. Gladstone on the political situation was 'very curious,' but did not shake her convictions. Unenthusiastic Home Rulers, Lord Herschell, the Lord Chancellor, and Lord Rosebery tried to persuade her that things could not go on as before, and that Home Rule was 'on the whole the most practicable, or least impracticable, method of governing the country.' The Queen did not agree: 'All was going on very well, and moderate measures of self-government could have been gradually resorted to, but not such a dangerous one, which, if it passed, would inevitably cause great misery to Ireland and most likely civil war.' The draft of the Queen's Speech in 1893 contained the phrase 'a Bill for the better

QUEEN VICTORIA

Government of Ireland,' and she telegraphed that the word 'better' should be omitted. Mr. Gladstone's letters recording the debates on the bill were acknowledged with the remark that 'She cannot conceal from him her feelings of anxiety and apprehension with reference to the provisions of this measure, which tend towards the disruption of her Empire and the establishment of an impracticable form of Government.'

In 1894 Mr. Gladstone resigned the Premiership. The Queen did not consult him about his successor. She bade him a most kind and warm farewell, but he was perplexed. 'Was I wrong in not rendering orally my best wishes? I was afraid that anything said by me should have the appearance of *touting*. A departing servant has some title to offer his hopes and prayers for the future; but a servant is one who has done, or tried to do, service in the past. There is in all this a great sincerity. There also seems to be some little mystery as to my own case with her. I saw no sign of embarrassment or preoccupation.' The Queen was ready to offer him a peerage, but knew that he would not accept it. Their last meeting was at Cimiez in 1897. 'The Queen's manner,' Mr. Gladstone notes, 'did not show the old and

QUEEN VICTORIA

usual vitality. It was still, but at the same time very decidedly kind, such as I had not seen it for a good while since my final resignation. She gave me her hand, a thing which is, I apprehended, rather rare with men, and which had never happened with me during all my life, though that life, be it remembered, had included some periods of rather decided favour.' Mrs. Gladstone, he says, bore the burden of the talk. 'To speak frankly, it seemed to me that the Queen's peculiar faculty and habit of conversation had disappeared. It was a faculty, not so much the free offspring of a rich and powerful mind, as the fruit of assiduous care with long practice and much opportunity.' When Mr. Gladstone died next year her comment was : 'He was very clever and full of ideas for the bettering and advancement of the country, always most loyal to me personally, and ready to do anything for the Royal Family ; but alas ! I am sure involuntarily, he did at times a good deal of harm.' To Mrs. Gladstone she wrote : 'I shall always gratefully remember how anxious he always was to help and serve me and mine in all that concerned my personal comfort and welfare, as well as that of my family.' In her reply the widow twists these words into a sense which Mr. Gladstone, who

QUEEN VICTORIA

always admired the Queen's sincerity, would have known that they could not bear : ' To have it in your own handwriting that he has been a personal comfort to Your Majesty is very precious to me, and what of all things he would have wished.'

Lord Rosebery succeeded Mr. Gladstone as Prime Minister with some misgivings lest, in carrying out the policy he had inherited, he should lose the Queen's confidence. But she assured him that :

She does not object to Liberal measures which are not revolutionary, and she does not think it possible that Lord Rosebery will destroy well-tried, valued, and necessary institutions for the sole purpose of flattering useless Radicals or pandering to the pride of those whose only desire is their own self-gratification.

She did think, however, that his speeches in the country were apt to be too frivolous for a Prime Minister : ' Lord Rosebery is so clever that he may be carried away by a sense of humour, which is a little dangerous.' Lord Rosebery, during his troubled Ministry, followed only too closely the Queen's advice as to keeping foreign affairs as far as possible from the Cabinet : it was the main obstacle, apart from clash of temperaments, to the solidarity of the Liberal

QUEEN VICTORIA

party. On matters other than foreign policy his fear of friction with the Queen was realized. As guardian of the Constitution she was up in arms against his avowal of an intention to reform the House of Lords. She even took advice on the possibility of dissolving Parliament before agitation on the question went further. She was strongly opposed to Scottish Disestablishment, a part of his inheritance from Mr. Gladstone, and much alarmed by Death Duties, though for that measure Sir William Harcourt, leader of the House of Commons, was to blame : ‘ It is so wrong in principle and will have such disastrous effects. The feeling is intensely strong on the subject ! Cannot it still now be modified ? The Queen is much alarmed and distressed about it. Sir Wm. Harcourt is actuated by spite to, and a wish to *injure*, the landed proprietors ! It will recoil on the poor who, and the charities which, will no longer be able to be helped.’ And when a private Member’s motion for payment of Members was supported by Sir William Harcourt and carried, she was horrified : ‘ It will lower the H. of C., already so much spoilt, still more.’ In June 1895 the cordite vote brought unexpected deliverance both to the Queen and to Lord Rosebery. At length her wish was

QUEEN VICTORIA

fulfilled : after the dissolution a Coalition Government having a majority of 152 came into being with Lord Salisbury as Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, and Mr. Chamberlain, who had redeemed his wild past, as Secretary for the Colonies.

Early in 1896 came the news of the Jameson Raid. The Queen was much concerned by the feeling roused in the country over the German Emperor's congratulatory telegram to President Kruger. She telegraphed to Lord Salisbury that he should 'urge the police to watch and prevent ill-usage of innocent and good German residents. Could you not hint to our respectable papers,' she added, 'not to write violent articles to excite the people? These newspaper wars often tend to provoke war, which would be too awful.' To the German Emperor she wrote as his Grandmother a moderate and dignified rebuke—too moderate to please the Prince of Wales. 'It would not do,' she explained, 'to have given him "a good snub." Those sharp, cutting answers and remarks only irritate and do harm, and in Sovereigns and Princes should be most carefully guarded against. William's faults come from impetuosity (as well as conceit) ; and calmness and firmness are the most powerful weapons in such

QUEEN VICTORIA

cases. Lord Salisbury's great strength is his great calmness and energy, both of which Mr. Chamberlain possesses.'

Mr. Chamberlain had another asset, his imperialism. Thanks largely to his suggestion the Diamond Jubilee was dominated by the imperial spirit : every race or nation acknowledging the Queen's supremacy was represented, and all the Colonial Prime Ministers were sworn in as Privy Councillors. Few Indian Princes were able to attend owing to the outbreak of plague and famine in India, but the Queen's interest in her Indian Empire was unabated. When the appointment of a new Viceroy, Mr. George Curzon, was mooted in 1898, she wrote to Lord Salisbury :

The future Viceroy must really shake himself more and more free from his red-tapist, narrow-minded council and entourage. He must be more independent, must *hear for himself* what the *feelings* of the Natives really are, and do what he thinks right, and not be guided by the *snobbish* and vulgar overbearing and offensive behaviour of many of our Civil and Political Agents, if we are to go on peacefully and happily in India, and to be liked and beloved by high and low, as well as respected as we ought to be, and not trying to trample on the people and continually reminding them and making them feel that they are a conquered people. They

QUEEN VICTORIA

must of course *feel* that we are masters, but it should be done kindly and not offensively, which alas ! is so often the case. Would Mr. Curzon feel and do this ?

In spite of failing eyesight and stiffness, which compelled the use of a wheel-chair, the Queen was full of vitality. Her love of music and the theatre was as conspicuous in her later years as it had been before the Prince Consort's death : her Diary contains many references to her enjoyment of performances by the brothers de Reszke and others. But events were to rouse her to other activities.

In the summer of 1899, when Lord Salisbury, though anxious about the Transvaal, was assuring the Queen that the country and the Cabinet, except perhaps Mr. Chamberlain, were against war, she was urging that ' whatever happened, we must not be humiliated in South Africa. We may have to send out a large force and call out the Reserves.' As in 1854, war when it came enlarged her sympathies. In October she was telegraphing to Lord Salisbury, ' I sincerely hope that the increased taxation, necessary to meet the expenses of the war, will not fall upon the working classes ; but I fear they will be most affected by the extra sixpence on beer.' Total abstinence was not one of the

QUEEN VICTORIA

causes which commanded the Queen's adhesion. She took a lively interest in every detail connected with the war, corresponding with generals, sending messages of encouragement to troops in the field, visiting the wounded, addressing regiments before their departure to South Africa. Critical of the War Office, and, as usual, sympathetic with the difficulties of the man on the spot, she was strongly opposed to any enquiry into the conduct of the war until it should have been won. Setting aside her own programme, for once without complaint, she spent the Christmas of 1899 at Windsor, and after the relief of Ladysmith she came up to Buckingham Palace, receiving a great ovation from the assembled crowds. 'I think the visit to London far more interesting and touching than even the Jubilees,' wrote Lord Rosebery: 'it was more simple and spontaneous. It was as if a great wave of sympathy and devotion had passed over the capital. Your Majesty intimated, as it were, to London: "I will come among you, and rejoice with you; as we have shared our anxieties and sorrows, we will share the common joys."' Her visit to London, he added, was in the Elizabethan spirit. When the German Emperor offered intervention

QUEEN VICTORIA

the Queen telegraphed to the Ambassador at Berlin: 'please convey to the Emperor that my whole nation is with me in a fixed determination to see this war through without intervention.

'The time for, and the terms of, peace must be left to our decision, and my country, which is suffering from so heavy a sacrifice of precious lives, will resist all interference.' *Nus et nostre pæple!* 'Worthy of Queen Elizabeth,' wrote his secretary for the Prince of Wales, who was in full accord. In the same grand manner were her sudden determination to visit Ireland, her order that Irish regiments should wear the shamrock on St. Patrick's Day, and the institution of the Irish Guards.

In the autumn the Queen's health was obviously failing. 'I was in attendance at Balmoral in May and October 1900,' wrote Lord James. 'In May the Queen was quite as of old—very cheerful, and enjoying any anecdote or smart conversation according to her nature. The war engaged her mind almost entirely. When I returned in October I found that the greatest change had taken place. The Queen had lost much flesh, and had shrunk so as to appear about one-half of the person she

QUEEN VICTORIA

had been. Her spirits, too, had apparently left her.' In November she was definitely ill, and after a partial recovery, when she was again able to read despatches and give audiences, she died on January 22, 1901.

EPILOGUE

HAD Queen Victoria died in her early widowhood her renown would have been less, and less deserved. Between 1861 and 1901 the weight of the Crown in the constitutional balance declined almost to nothing : its emotional potency on the hearts of the people reached its acme at the close of her reign. This transformation of the monarchy from a political institution to a habit of feeling, which has preserved and will always preserve the memory of Queen Victoria as a great historic figure, was the result of her forty years of widowhood. The consolidation of the party system would in any case have compelled a change in the relations between Crown and Cabinet, which might have been resisted as an innovation, or accepted as a natural development, by the ageing Prince. But resistance or acceptance would have been deliberate : by the Prince's death the Crown was swept helplessly into the stream of change. Had he lived it is certain that his experience,

QUEEN VICTORIA

and his intellectual equality with any Minister he had to deal with, would have preserved for some decades longer the efficacy of the Crown as a director, and even initiator, of policy. A strong will, a strong sense of duty and a pious memory of her husband's instructions, guaranteed the correctness of the Queen's demeanour, but her intellect was not strong enough to keep her heart above party. After her long dependence on a superior mind she recovered interest and gratification in her position by becoming a sound Beaconsfieldian Tory. Mr. Gladstone was almost compelled in self-defence to close the door of the Cabinet against her, and in return her growing hoard of anecdotal wisdom was shut up from her Ministers as a body, and only imparted to those who became her friends. Her relations with Liberal Ministers shrank to a mutual commerce of deference and interference, and, when Lord Salisbury reopened the Cabinet door, it was not so much to a Constitutional Sovereign as to a stout-hearted old Imperialist, who possessed an unrivalled acquaintance with the royal families of Europe in their uttermost ramifications. Yet all the while she had been unconsciously recovering for herself and her successors the position which in the happiest years of his reign

EPILOGUE

had been held by George III., and by him alone. Whatever fancies the Prince Consort may once have nursed of her resuming the rôle of William III., who chose his Ministers and presided at his own Cabinet, Melbourne had rightly divined that with English people the Good Old King was a far more palatable ideal. Yet it may be doubted whether the Queen ever realized it. In her worst miseries during Gladstone's administration, when she was talking wildly and vaguely of abdication, and meditating an enforced dissolution of Parliament, she never saw herself in the part, which Elizabeth would have seized on at once, of a Queen appealing against her servants to her loving people. She was always the Head of the Government, and to the end she thought of the Constitution, as it had been in her girlhood, the Sovereign ruling through a body of gentlemen selected by the respectable classes to govern the rest for their own good. And yet she threw away the one instrument which she might have used with perfect constitutional propriety to impose herself effectually upon her Government as its Head. If she had resided at Buckingham Palace while Parliament was sitting, the diminution of her powers would have been far less evident. Ministers com-

QUEEN VICTORIA

manded to the Presence to explain themselves and their doings would have been constantly under the charm of her voice, her dignity and her courtesy, instead of being intermittently exasperated by her italics and her telegrams. Nor did she avail herself of that wider knowledge of men and affairs and the circumstances of a changing time which the Prince of Wales was acquiring all through his years of unemployment. His unlikeness to his father was only too plain, and his public work on housing, hospitals and exhibitions, by which he carried on the most popular part of the Prince Consort's activities, was little more than a safe occupation to keep him from interfering in real affairs. Though in her later years she sometimes used him as negotiator, there was no constant and organized consultation between them. She had her sphere, and she kept him in his. She was the Head of the State, he was the Head of Society, and this cleavage between the Court and Society emphasized, and perhaps assisted, the decline of the aristocracy as a political force. Could the Queen and the Prince have worked in alliance it is not impossible that the Court, despised by Beaconsfield and Gladstone equally, would have come to be again a power in the State. It would

EPILOGUE

not have been a Weimar, but it might have been a respectable Whitehall.

Looking back through the long years of her reign, we can see her moving towards the position confirmed by the two Jubilees, and emotionally perfected by the accident of the South African War. Never in character, except for her signal truthfulness, nor in intellect, a great woman, she had become a great personage ; and the verdict of her people, looking back with reverence and affection on a reign of sixty-three years spent in the punctual discharge of every duty she could understand, pronounced her to have been a great Queen.

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Mr. Guedalla's *The Queen and Mr. Gladstone* was not published when I finished this book, but I have gratefully availed myself of his permission to make use of the earlier chapters as printed in the *Sunday Times*.

INDEX

- Aberdeen, Lord, 64, 72, 73, 75,
 80, 108, 144
 Adelaide, Queen, 15, 48, 135
 Albert, Prince, 17, 18, 35, 36,
 37, 38, 40, 43, 45, 49, 54, 55,
 56, 57, 58, 59, 65, 66, 68, 69,
 70, 72, 73, 75, 77, 83, 86, 89,
 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 98, 99,
 108, 135, 153, 158, 159
 Alexander, Prince of Orange,
 17
 Alexandra, Princess, 96
 Alfred, Prince, 89
 American War, the, 90
 Anne, Queen, 44
 Arabi Pasha, 128
 Argyll, Duke of, 130
 Austrian Ambassador, the, 63

 Bagehot, 70, 71, 105, 124
 Balmoral, 72
 Beaconsfield, Lord. See Dis-
 raeli.
 Beatrice, Princess, 92
 Blunt, Wilfred, 145
 Boer War, 154, 161
 Borgo, Count Pozzo di, 20
 Bradshaw, 48
Bride of Lammermoor (Scott), 29
 Bright, John, 127, 132, 136
 Browning, 109
 Bulgarian atrocities, 119
 Byng, George, 19
 Byron, 19

 Canning, 80, 84
 Carbonari, 83
 Carlyle, Thomas, 108
 Castlereagh, Lord, 84
 Cavour, 83
 Chamberlain, 126, 140, 151, 152
 Chantrey, 26
 Charles I., 44
 Charles II., 44
 Charlotte, the Princess, 9, 10, 21
 Chartist Demonstrations, 63 n.
 Chester, Dean of, 16
 Churchill, Lord Randolph, 136
 Clarence, Duke of. See
 William IV.
 Clark, Sir James, 31
 Cobden, 89
 Colenso, Bishop, 118
 Colonial and Indian Exhi-
 bition, 138
Coningsby (Disraeli), 32 n.
 Corn Laws, 55, 56
 Courtney, Leonard, 124
 Creevey, Mr., 11
 Croker, 20
 Cromwell, 44
 Cumberland, Duke of. See
 Hanover, King of
 Curzon, George, 152-153

 Derby, Lord, 74, 82, 87, 102,
 104, 116, 120, 121
 de Reszke (Jean and Édouard),
 153

QUEEN VICTORIA

- Diamond Jubilee, 152
 Dickens, Charles, 29, 117
 Dilke, Sir Charles, 115, 126
 Dillwyn, Mr., 124
 Disraeli, 20, 54, 55, 81, 82, 102,
 103, 104, 107, 110, 112, 113,
 115, 116, 117, 118, 124, 127,
 135, 140, 145, 160
 Don Pacifico, 60
 Durham, Lord, 15

 East India Co., 87
 Eastlake, Lady, 109
 Eldon, Lord, 27
 Elizabeth, Queen, 71, 72, 155,
 159
 Ellenborough, Lord, 100, 125
 Emmanuel, King, 86
 Ernest, Prince of Coburg, 17, 37
 Eugénie, the Empress, 76, 77,
 79
Examiner, The, 55
 Exhibition, Great, of 1851, 68,
 100-101

 Fénelon, 28
 Forster, W. E., 123
 Fox, 84
 Fox Cabinet (1806), 80
 Franchise Bill, 130
 Frederick William of Prussia, 89
 Frere, Sir Bartle, 125
 Froude, 109

 Garibaldi, 85
 Garrett, Elizabeth, 109
 George III., 9, 10, 27, 65, 70,
 130, 159
 George IV., 9, 10, 11, 13, 70
 Gladstone, 48, 80, 81, 82, 83,
 86, 93, 102, 110, 113, 114,
 115, 118, 121, 122, 123, 126,
 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132,
 133, 135, 138, 139, 140, 143,
 144-145, 146, 147, 148, 149,
 158, 160
 Gladstone, Mrs., 145, 148
 Gordon, 128
 Gordon, Miss, 129
 Goschen, Mr., 131, 132, 136
 Granville, Lord, 99, 100, 116,
 121, 127, 133, 135
 Greek Government Claim, 60
 Grey, Lord, 84, 144
 Grey, Sir G., 144
 Grey, General, 100
 Grote, Mr., 109
 Grote, Mrs., 109
 Grote, Mr. and Mrs., 108-109
 Guillon, Mme., 28

 Hanover, King of, Ernest Aug-
 ustus, 35, 36, 53, 112 n.
 Harcourt, Sir William, 143, 150
 Hartington, Lord, 121, 122,
 129, 131, 132, 136, 139, 142
 Hartley Colliery Disaster, 94
 Hastings, Lady Flora, 31
 Hastings, family of, 32
 Haynau, General, 62, 63
 Herschell, Lord, 146
 Hobhouse, Sir John Cam, 19
 Hohenlohe, Prince von, 14
 Holland, King of, 30
 Holland, Sir Henry, 109
 Holroyd, Maria Josepha, 20
 Home Rule, 139, 146
 Hume, Joseph, 19
 Hunt, Ward, 107 n.
 Hyde Park Riots, 102

INDEX

- Income Tax, Introduction of, 53
- Indian Mutiny, 87
- Irish Church, Disestablishment of, 111
- Irish Coercion Bill, 56
- Irish University Bill, 115
- Italian Revolution, the, 86

- Jamaica Rebellion, 32
- James, Lord, 155
- Jameson Raid, 151
- Jenner, Sir William, 114
- Jubilee, the, 140, 143

- Kent, Duchess of, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 22, 25, 29, 31, 75, 93
- Kent, Duke of, 9, 10, 11, 15, 21, 53
- Kruger, President, 151

- Labouchere, 141
- Lansdowne, Lord, 80, 107
- Lecky, Mr., 109
- Lehzen, Baroness, 12, 25, 31, 43, 52
- Leiningen, Prince Ernest of, 9
- Leiningen, Princess Féodore, 10, 12, 14, 28
- Leopold, King, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 24, 26, 27, 30, 31, 34, 35, 46, 54, 64, 69, 71, 77
- Leopold, Prince, 9, 10, 11, 13
- Leopold, Prince (as King of the Belgians), 14
- Lieven, Princess, 79
- Lincoln, Mrs., 94
- Lorne, Marquis of, 113
- Louise, Princess, 113
- Lyell, Sir C. and Lady, 109

- Macaulay, 64
- Magnan, Maréchal, 77
- Manipur murders, 142
- Manners, Lord John, 54
- Melbourne, Lord, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 54, 57, 58, 71, 89, 95, 108, 112, 123, 126, 127, 145, 159
- Metternich, Prince, 63
- Militia Bill (1852), 65
- Morley, Lord, 129, 133, 146

- Napoleon, Louis, 64, 75, 76, 78
- Normanby, Lord, 64
- Norton, Mrs., 50

- O'Connell, 112
- Owen, Professor, 109

- Palmerston, Lord, 20, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 66, 72, 75, 80, 82, 83, 85, 87, 95, 98, 100, 144
- Parnell, 128, 141
- Parnell case, 142
- Peel, Sir Robert, 19, 32, 33, 34, 41, 44, 47, 48, 51, 52, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 81, 82, 107, 127, 144
- People's Palace, 141
- Philip (of Spain), 72
- Phoenix Park murders, 128
- Pitt, 80, 84
- Ponsonby, Sir Henry, 129, 132, 133
- Praetorius, Dr., 50
- Prussia, Crown Princess of, 99

QUEEN VICTORIA

- Public Worship Regulation Bill, 116
Puseyites, 112
Rebecca Riots, 51
Reform Bill of 1832, 80
Reform Bill of 1867, 104
Reform Bill (the Second), 101
Rigby, Mr., 20
Ritualists, 116
Rosebery, Lord, 133, 134, 136, 139, 145, 146, 149, 154
Royal, The Princess, 43, 69, 89
Rubinstein, Anton, 29
Russell administration, the, 60
Russell despatch to Italy, 85-86
Russell, Lord John, 26, 29, 55, 57, 58, 61, 62, 80, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 99, 101, 102, 104, 144
Salisbury, Lord, 120, 131, 132, 133, 136, 137, 139, 143, 144, 151, 152, 153, 158
Sardinia, King of, 86
Saxe-Coburg, Duke of, 9
Scott, Sir Walter, 29
Scottish Disestablishment, 150
Selden, 86
Selwyn, Bishop, 117
Seymour, Admiral, 30
Spencer, Lord, 54
Stanley, Lady Augusta, 108, 109
Stanley, Lord, 25
Stockmar, Baron, 21, 25-26, 28, 35, 40, 41, 45, 49, 50, 52, 54, 55, 60, 66, 70, 73, 86, 89, 95
Stockmar Memorandum, 62
Thiers, 64
Tyndall, Professor, 109
Wales, Prince of, 48, 89, 95, 96, 97, 98, 112, 113, 114, 133, 145, 151, 155, 160
Wellington, Duke of, 11, 28, 32, 48, 84
Whately, Archbishop of Dublin, 19
Wilberforce, Bishop, 48
Wilhelm, the Emperor, 151, 154
William III., 159
William IV., 10, 11, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 24, 42, 44, 47, 65, 70, 74, 75
York, Duke of, 10, 11, 13

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